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THE  
USEFULNESS  
OF THE  
STAGE,

*To the Happiness of  
Mankind.*

*To Government, and  
To Religion.*

Occasioned by a late Book,  
written by *Jeremy Collier*, M. A.

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By Mr. DENNIS.

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L O N D O N,  
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the Piazza of the Royal Exchange. 1698.





# INTRODUCTION.

**T**He best things here below, are liable to be corrupted, and the better things are in their own natures, the more mischievous are they if corrupted. For that which is superlatively good in it self can be corrupted by nothing but extraordinary malice. Since then the Stage is acknowledg'd by its greatest adversaries to be in it self good, and instrumental to the instruction of mankind, nothing can be more unreasonable than to exhort people to ruin it instead of reforming it, since at that rate we must think of abolishing much more important establishments. Yet that is apparently the design of Mr Collier's Book, tho his malice infinitely surpassing his ability, as it certainly does, whatever some people may think of him, his performance is somewhat awkward. For in the Introduction

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~~duction to his Book he gives you rea-~~  
sons why the Stage in general ought to  
be commended; in the first Chapters of  
his Book he pretends to shew cause  
why the *English* Stage ought to be re-  
form'd, and in the sixth and last Chapter  
he pretends to prove by Authority that  
no Stage ought to be allow'd. In the  
beginning of his Book he produces his  
own reasons why the Stage reform'd  
ought to be encourag'd, and in the end  
of the same Book he brings other mens  
opinions to shew that every Stage ought  
to be abolish'd; and so endeavours to  
ruine his own Reasons by a long scroll  
of other peoples Authorities, which is  
certainly a pleasant condescension;  
but such is the fantastick humility of  
pedantick pride. And yet Mr Collier  
is very right and very sincere in his  
Reasons, and very wrong and very  
corrupt in his Authorities. As if he  
were so great an enemy to the truth,  
that he would suborn the very dead to  
destroy the force of what he himself  
had asserted.

If Mr Collier had only attack'd the  
Corruptions of the Stage, for my own  
part I should have been so far from  
blaming

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blaming him; that I should have publicly return'd him my thanks: For the Causes are so great, that there is a necessity for the reforming them; not that I think that with all its corruptions the Stage has debauch'd the people: I am fully convinc'd it has not, and I believe I have said enough in the following treatise to convince the Reader of it. But this is certain, that the corruptions of the Stage hinder its efficacy in the reformation of manners. For, besides that Vice is contrary to Virtue, it renders the Stage little and contemptible; for nothing but Virtue can make anything awful and truly great, and nothing but what is awful and truly great can be universally respected, and by that means in a condition to influence the minds of the people. For this reason, as I said above, if Mr Collier had only attack'd the licentiousness of the Stage, in so fair a manner as he ought to have done it, I had return'd him my thanks, but when I found by his last Chapter, that his design was against the Stage itself, I thought I could not spend a month more usefully, than in the vindication of it.

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My business therefore is a vindication of the Stage, and not of the Corruptions or the abuses of it. And therefore I have no further meddled with Mr Collier's Book, than as I have had occasion to shew, that he has endeavour'd to make some things pass for abuses, either of the Stage in general, or of the *English* Stage particularly, which are so far from being abuses, that they may be accounted excellences.

This little Treatise was conceiv'd, dispos'd, transcrib'd and printed in a month; and tho on that very account it may not be wholly free from error, yet this I can assure the Reader, that I have industriously endeavour'd not to err, tho I verily believe that Mr Collier industriously endeavour'd to err, as far as he thought it might be consistent with the deceiving of others.

The method that I have us'd has been this: I have endeavour'd to shew that the Stage in general is useful to the happiness of Mankind, to the welfare of Government, and the advancement of Religion: And under the head of Government I have endeavour'd to prove, that the Stage does not encourage Re-  
venge.



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venge, as Mr *Collier* asserts in his last Chapter ; and that by encouraging Pride, which is another thing that he charges upon it, it provides for the happiness of particular men, and the publick. I have endeavour'd to shew too, in defence of the *English* Stage, that it is to be commended for its impartiality, and in exempting no degree or order of men from censure.

I saw very well that there was no proceeding any farther in the vindication of it: For no man can make any reasonable defence, either for the immorality or the immodesty, or the unnecessary wanton prophaneness, which are too justly charg'd upon it. But for the particular Gentlemen which Mr *Collier* has attack'd in some particular passages, which he has industriously cull'd from their writings, I could make a very good defence for several of em, if I were not satisfied that they were abler to defend themselves.

He has treated them indeed with the last disdain, and the last contempt, not considering, that by doing it, he has treated all at the same rate, who profess an esteem for them, that is, all the



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the Town. He has given them some language which must be resented by all who profess Humanity.

For, Mr Collier is so far from having shown in his Book, either the meekness of a true Christian, or the humility of an exemplary Pastor, that he has neither the reasoning of a man of sense in it, nor the style of a polite man, nor the sincerity of an honest man, nor the humanity of a Gentleman, or a man of Letters.

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Mr Collier has attacked in some particular passages, which he has industrially culled from their writings, I could make a very good defence to several of em, if I were not afraid that they were

He has treated them indeed with the last disdain, and the last contempt, not considering that by doing so, he has treated all at the same rate, who profess an esteem for them, that is, all the

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CHAP. I.

*That the Stage is instrumental  
to the Happiness of Man-  
kind.*

**N**othing can more strongly re-  
commend any thing to us, than  
the assuring us, that it will im-  
prove our happiness. For the chief end  
B and

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and design of man is to make himself happy. 'Tis what he constantly has in his eye, and in order to which, he takes every step that he makes: In whatever he does or he does not, he designs to improve or maintain his happiness. And 'tis by this universal principle, that God maintains the harmony, and order, and quiet of the reasonable World. It had indeed been an inconsistency in providence, to have made a thinking and reasoning Creature, that had been indifferent as to misery and happiness; for God had made such a one only to disturb the rest, and consequently had acted against his own design.

If then I can say enough to convince the Reader, that the Stage is instrumental to the happiness of Mankind, and to his own by consequence, it is evident that I need say no more to make him espouse its interest.

I shall proceed then to the proving these two things..

First, That the Stage is instrumental to the happiness of Mankind in general.

Secondly, That it is more particularly instrumental to the happiness of Englishmen.

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The Stage is instrumental to the happiness of Mankind in general. And here it will be necessary to declare what is meant by happiness, and to proceed upon that.

By happiness then, I never could understand any thing else but pleasure; for I never could have any notion of happiness, that did not agree with pleasure, or any notion of pleasure, that did not agree with happiness. I could never possibly conceive how any one can be happy without being pleas'd, or pleas'd without being happy. 'Tis universally acknowledg'd by Mankind, that happiness consists in pleasure, which is evident from this, that whatever a man does, whether in spiritual or temporal affairs, whether in matters of profit or diversion, pleasure is at least the chief and the final motive to it, if it is not the immediate one. And providence seems to have sufficiently declar'd, that pleasure was intended for our Spring and Fountain of Action, when it made it the incentive to those very acts, by which we propagate our kind and preserve our selves. As if Self-love without pleasure were insufficient for



either ; for as I my self have know several, who have chosen rather to dye, than to go through tedious courses of Physick ; so I make no doubt, but several would have taken the same resolution, rather than have supported life by a perpetual course of eating, which had differ'd in nothing from a course of Physick, if eating and pleasure had not been things inseparable. Now as 'tis pleasure that obliges man to persevere himself, it is the very same that has sometimes the force to prevail upon him to his own destruction. For as *Monseigneur Pascal* observes, the very men who hang, and who drown themselves are instigated by the secret pleasure, which they have from the thought that they shall be freed from pain,

Since therefore man, in every thing that he does proposes pleasure to himself, it follows, that in pleasure consists his happiness. But tho he always proposes it, he very often falls short of it, For pleasure is not in his own power, since if it were, it would follow from thence, that happiness were in his power. The want of which has been always the complaint of men, both sacred



of the Stage.

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cred and secular, in all Ages, in all Countries, and in all Conditions. *Man that is born of a woman is but of few days, and full of trouble,* says Job Chap. 14. Verse 1. Of the same nature are the two complaints of Horace, which are so fine, and so poetical, and so becoming of the best antiquity.

*Scandit aratas vitiosa naves  
Curæ, nec turmas equitum & relinquit  
Ocior Cervis, & agente Nimbo  
Ocyor Euro.*

Hor. Ode  
Lib. 2.

And that other, in the first Ode of the third Book.

*Timor & mina  
Scandunt eodem quo Dominus, neque.  
Decedit arata triremi, &  
Post equitem sedit atra cura.*

In short, they who have made the most reflections on it, have been the most satisfy'd of it, and above all Philosophers; who, by the voluminous instructions, by the laborious directions which they have left to posterity, have declar'd themselves sensible,

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that to be happy is a very difficult thing.

And the reason why they of all men have always found it so difficult is, because they always propounded to owe their happiness to reason, tho one would think, that experience might have convinc'd them of the folly of such a design, because they had seen that the most thinking and the most reasonable, had always most complain'd.

For reason may often afflict us, and make us miserable, by setting our impotence or our guilt before us; but that which it generally does, is the maintaining us in a languishing state of indifference, which perhaps is more remov'd from pleasure, than that is from affliction, and which may be said to be the ordinary state of men.

It is plain then, that reason by maintaining us in that state, is an impediment to our pleasure, which is our happiness. For to be pleas'd a man must come out of his ordinary state; now nothing in this life can bring him out of it but passion alone, which Reason pretends to combat.

Nothing but passion in effect can please us, which every one may know by experience : For when any man is pleas'd, he may find by reflection that at the same time he is mov'd. The pleasure that any man meets with ofteneft is the pleasure of Sence. Let any one examine himself in that, and he will find that the pleasure is owing to passion ; for the pleasure vanishes with the desire, and is succeeded by loathing, which is a sort of grief.

Since nothing but pleasure can make us happy, it follows that to be very happy, we must be much pleas'd ; and since nothing but passion can please us, it follows that to be very much pleas'd we must be very much mov'd ; this needs no proof, or if it did, experience would be a very convincing one ; since any one may find when he has a great deal of pleasure that he is extremely mov'd.

And that very height and fulness of pleasure which we are promis'd in another life, must, we are told, proceed from passion, or something which resembles passion. At least no man has so much as pretended that it will be

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the result of Reason. For we shall then be deliver'd from these mortal Organs, and Reason shall then be no more. We shall then no more have occasion from premisses to draw conclusions, and a long train of consequences; for, becoming all spirit and all knowledge, we shall see things as they are: We shall lead the glorious life of Angels, a life exalted above all Reason, a life consisting of Extasie and Intelligence.

Thus is it plain that the happiness both of this life and the other is owing to passion, and not to reason. But tho we can never be happy by the force of Reason, yet while we are in this life we cannot possibly be happy without it, or against it. For since man is by his nature a reasonable creature, to suppose man happy against Reason, is to suppose him happy against Nature, which is absurd and monstrous. We have shewn, that a man must be pleas'd to be happy, and must be mov'd to be pleas'd; and that to please him to a height, you must move him in proportion: But then the passions must be rais'd after such a manner as to take reason along with them. If reason is  
quite

quite overcome, the pleasure is neither long, nor sincere, nor safe. For how many that have been transported beyond their reason, have never more recover'd it. If reason resists, a mans breast becomes the seat of Civil War, and the Combat makes him miserable. For these passions, which are in their natures so very troublesome, are only so because their motions are always contrary to the motion of the will; as grief, sorrow, shame and jealousy. And that which makes some passions in their natures pleasant, is because they move with the will, as love, joy, pity, hope, terror, and sometimes anger. But this is certain, that no passion can move in those a full consent with the will, unless at the same time it be approv'd of by the understanding. And no passion can be allow'd of by the understanding, that is not rais'd by its true springs, and augmented by its just degrees. Now in the world it is so very rare to have our passions thus rais'd, and so improv'd, that that is the reason why we are so seldom thoroughly and sincerely pleas'd. But in the Drama the passions are false and abominable,



ble<sup>l</sup>, unless they are mov'd by their true springs, and rais'd by their just degrees. Thus are they mov'd, thus are they rais'd in every well writ Tragedy, till they come to as great a height as reason can very well bear. Besides, the very motion has a tendency to the subjecting them to reason, and the very raising purges and moderates them. So that the passions are seldom any where so pleasing, and no where so safe as they are in Tragedy. Thus have I shown, that to be happy is to be pleas'd, and that to be pleas'd is to be mov'd in such a manner as is allow'd of by Reason; I have shown too that Tragedy moves us thus, and consequently pleases us, and consequently makes us happy. Which was the thing to be prov'd.

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CHAP. II.

*That the Stage is more particularly instrumental to the happiness of English men.*

WE have shown in the former Chapter, that all happiness consists in pleasure, and that all pleasure proceeds from passion ; but that passion to produce pleasure, must be rais'd after such a manner, as to move in consent with the will, and consequently to be allow'd of by the understanding, upon which we took an occasion to shew, that thinking and reasoning people as Philosophers, and the like, have made most complaints of the misery of humane life, because they have endeavour'd to deduce their happiness from reason, and not from passion. But another reason may be given, and that is, that such people, by reason of  
the

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the exactness or moroseness of their judgments, are too scrupulous in the allowance of the passions, from whence it proceeds, that things very rarely happen in life, to raise their passions in such a manner, as to approve them to their understandings, and consequently to make them move in consent with their wills. From whence it proceeds, that splenatick persons are to very unhappy, and so much harder to be pleas'd than others, which is every day confirm'd by experience. Indeed 'tis observ'd every day in splenatick people, that their passions move for the most part, with a contrary motion to that of their wills, and so afflict them instead of delighting them. Now there is no Nation in *Europe*, as has been observ'd above a thousand times, that is so generally addicted to the Spleen as the *English*. And which is apparent to any observer, from the reigning distemper of the Clime, which is inseparable from the Spleen; from that gloomy and sullen temper, which is generally spread through the Nation: from that natural discontentedness which makes us so uneasie to one another,

ther, because we are so uneasie to our selves ; and lastly, from our jealousies and suspicions, which makes us so uneasie to our selves, and to one another, and have so often made us dangerous to the Government, and by consequence to our selves. Now the *English* Being more splenatick than other people, and consequently more thoughtful and more reflecting, and therefore more scrupulous in allowing their passions, and consequently things seldom hapning in life to move their passions so agreeably to their reasons, as to entertain and please them ; and there being no true and sincere pleasure unless these passions are thus mov'd, nor any happiness without pleasure, it follows, that the *English* to be happy, have more need than other people of something that will raise their passions in such a manner, as shall be agreeable to their reasons, and that by consequence they have more need of the Drama.

C H A P.



## C H A P. III.

*The Objections from Reason  
answer'd.*

**B**UT now we proceed to answer Objections, and to shew that we design to use Mr Collier with all the fairness imaginable; I shall not only endeavour to answer all that may be objected from Mr. Collier's Book; against what I have said in the foregoing Chapters in the behalf of the Stage; I say, I shall not only endeavour to answer this, after I have propounded it in the most forcible manner in which it can be urg'd; but I shall make it my business to reply to all that has been objected by other adversaries, or that I can foresee may be hereafter objected.

The objections then against what I have said in Defence of the Stage in the foregoing Chapters, are or may be of three sorts. First,



First, Objections from Reason.  
Secondly, From Authority, and  
Thirdly, From Religion.

First then, I shall endeavour to answer what may be objected from Reason, *viz.* That tho it should be granted that the Theatre makes people happy for the present, yet it afterwards infallibly makes them miserable: First, by nourishing and fomenting their passions; and secondly, by indulging their vices, and making them Libertines: And that 'tis neither the part of a prudent man, nor a good Christian, to make choice of such a momentary delight, as will be follow'd by so much affliction.

And first, say the Adversaries of the Stage, the Drama tends to the making of people unhappy, because it nourishes and foment those passions, that occasion the follies and imprudencies from whence come all their misfortunes: And

First, It indulges Terror and Pity, and the rest of the passions.

Secondly, It not only indulges Love where it is, but creates it where it is not.

First then, say they, it indulges Terror, Pity, and the rest of the passions. For, says a certain *French Gentleman*, who is famous for Criticism, that purgation which *Aristotle* mentions is meerly chimerical; the more the passions in any one are mov'd, the more obnoxious they are to be mov'd; and the more unruly they grow.

But, by *Monfieur De St. Evremond's* favour, this is not only to contradict *Aristotle*, but every mans daily experience. For every man finds, and every man of sense particularly, that the longer he frequents Plays the harder he is to be pleas'd, that is, the harder he is to be mov'd; and when any man of judgment, who has a long time frequented Plays, happens to be very much touch'd by a Scene, we may conclude that that Scene is very well writ, both for nature and art.

And indeed, if people who have a long time frequented Plays are so hard to be mov'd to compassion, that a Poet is oblig'd so to contrive his incidents  
and

and his Characters, that the last shall be most deplorable, and the first most proper to move compassion; may it not be very well suppos'd, that such a one will not be over obnoxious to feel too much compassion upon the view of calamities, which happen every day in the world, when they and the persons to whom they happen, may not so much as once in an Age, have all the qualifications that are requir'd extremely to touch him.

But, Secondly, whereas it is urg'd, that the Drama and particularly Tragedy, manifestly indulges Love where it is, and creates it where it is not. To this I answer: That the Love which is shewn in a Tragedy is lawful and regular, or it is not. If it is not, why then in a Play, which is writ as it should be (for I pretend not to defend the errors or corruptions of the Stage) it is shewn unfortunate in the Catastrophe, which is sufficient to make an Audience averse from engaging in the excesses of that passion. But if the Love that is shewn is lawful and regular, nothing makes a man happier than that passion. I speak ev'n of that, i. e. **C** *mediate*

mediate pleasure which attends the passion itself. And as it certainly makes him happy for the present, so there is no passion which puts a man upon things that make him happier for the future. For as people have for the most part a very high opinion of the belov'd object, it makes them endeavour to become worthy of it, and to encrease in knowledge and virtue; and not only frequently reclaims them from some grosser pleasures, of which they were fond before, but breeds in them an utter detestation of some unnatural vices, which have been so much in use in *England*, for these last thirty years.

But now we come to the second pretended Reason, why the Drama tends to the making of men unhappy, and that is, say the Adversaries of the Stage, because it encourages and indulges their vices. To which we answer; that the Drama, and particular Tragedy, in its purity, is so far from having that effect, that it must of necessity make men virtuous; First, because it moderates the passions, whose excesses cause their vices; Secondly, because it instructs them in their duties, both by its fable and



and by its sentences. But here they start an objection, which some imagin a strong one, which is, That the Nation has been more corrupted since the establishment of the Drama, upon the restoration, than ever it was before. To which I answer.

First, That that corruption of manners, tho it should be granted to proceed from the Stage, can yet only proceed from the licentious abuses of it, which no man pretends to defend. But,

Secondly, We affirm that this corruption of manners, cannot be reasonably said to proceed, no not even from those palpable abuses of the Stage, which we will not pretend to vindicate.

First, For if the corruption of manners proceeded from the abuses of the Stage, how comes it to pass that we never heard any complaint of the like corruption of manners before the restoration of *Charles the Second*, since it is plain from Mr *Collier's* Book, that the Drama flourish'd in the Reign of King *James I.* and flourish'd with the like licentiousness. But,



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Secondly, if this general corruption of manners is to be attributed to the abuses of the Stage, from hence it will follow, that there should be the greatest corruption of manners where the Theatres are most frequented, or most licentious, which is not true: for in *France* the Theatres are less licentious than ours, and yet the corruption of manners is there as great, if you only except our drinking, which, as I shall prove anon, can never proceed from any encouragement of the Stage. In *Germany* and in *Italy* the Theatres are less frequented: for in *Italy* they seldom have Plays unless in the Carnival, and in most of the little *German* Sovereignities, they have not constant Theatres. And yet in *Germany* they drink more, and in *Italy* they are more intemperate in the use of women and unnatural vices.

But Thirdly, The corruption of manners upon the restoration, appear'd with all the fury of Libertinism, even before the Play House was re-establish'd and long before it could have any influence on manners, so that another cause of that corruption is to be enquir'd after, than

than the re-establishment of the Drama, and that can be nothing but that beastly reformation, which in the time of the late Civil Wars, was begun at the Tail instead of the Head and the Heart; and which oppress and persecuted mens inclinations, instead of correcting and converting them, which afterwards broke out with the same violence, that a raging fire does upon its first getting vent. And that which gave it so licentious a vent was, not only the permission, but the example of the Court, which for the most part was just arriv'd from abroad with the King, where it had endeavour'd by foreign corruption to sweeten, or at least to soften adversity, and having sojourn'd for a considerable time, both at *Paris* and in the *Low Countries*, united the spirit of the *French Whoring*, to the fury of the *Dutch Drinking*. So that the Poets who writ immediately after the restoration, were obliged to humour the deprav'd tastes of their Audience. For as an impenitent Sinner that should be immediately transported to Heaven, would be incapable of partaking of the happiness of the place, because his in-

clinations and affections would not be prepar'd for it, so if the Poets of these times had writ in a manner purely instructive, without any mixture of lewdness, the Appetites of the Audience were so far debauch'd, that they would have judg'd the entertainment insipid, so that the spirit of Libertinism which came in with the Court, and for which the people were so well prepar'd by the sham-reformation of manners, caus'd the lewdness of their Plays, and not the lewdness of Plays the spirit of Libertinism. For 'tis ridiculous to assign a cause of so long a standing, to so new, so sudden, and so extraordinary an effect, when we may assign a cause so new, so probable, and unheard of before, as the inclinations of the people, returning with violence to their natural bent, upon the encouragement and example of a Court, that was come home with all the corruptions of a foreign Luxury; so that the sham-reformation being in a great measure the cause of that spirit of Libertinism, which with so much fury came in with King *Charles* the Second, and the putting down the Play House being part of  
of

of that reformation, 'tis evident that the Corruption of the Nation is so far from proceeding from the Play-house, that it partly proceeds from having no Plays at all.

Fourthly, That the Corruption of Manners is not to be attributed to the licentiousness of the Drama, may appear from the consideration of the reigning vices, I mean those moral vices which have more immediate influence upon mens conduct, and consequently upon their happiness. And those are chiefly four.

1. The love of Women.
2. Drinking.
3. Gaming.
4. Unnatural sins.

For drinking and gaming, their excesses cannot be reasonably charg'd upon the Stage, for the following Reasons.

First, Because it cannot possibly be conceiv'd, that so reasonable a diversion as the Drama, can encourage or incline men to so unreasonable a



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one as gaming, or so brutal a one as drunkenness.

Secondly, Because these two vices have been made odious and ridiculous by our Plays, instead of being shewn agreeable. As for Drunkenness, to shew the sinner is sufficient to discredit the vice; for a Drunkard of necessity always appears either odious or ridiculous. And for a Gamester, I never knew any one shewn in a Play, but either as a Fool or a Rascal.

Thirdly, Because those two vices flourish in places that are too remote, and in persons that are too abject to be encourag'd or influenc'd by the Stage. There is drinking and gaming in the furthest North and the furthest West, among Peasants, as well as among Dukes and Peers. But here perhaps some visionary Zealot will urge, that these two vices, even these remote places, and these abject persons proceed from the influence of that irreligion, which is caus'd by the corruptions of the Stage, and will with as much reason and as much modesty deduce the lewdness which is transacted in the Tin mines, in *Cornwall*, and in the Coal-pits of *Newcastle*, from the daily abominations

bominations of the Pits of the two Play-houses, as he would derive the brutality of the high *Dutch* Drinking, from the prophaneness of our *English* Drama.

But what will he say then to those Gentlemen, who neither are suppos'd to go to our Theatres, nor to converse much with those who do, nor to be liable to be corrupted by them; what will they say to these Gentlemen, if they can be prov'd to have a considerable share of the two fore-mention'd vices? What can they answer? For it would be ridiculously absurd to reply, that the Clergy are corrupted by the Laity, whom it is their business to convert. But here I think my self oblig'd to declare, that I by no means design this as a reflection upon the Church of *England*, who I am satisfy'd may more justly boast of its Clergy, than any other Church whatsoever; a Clergy that are equally illustrious for their Piety and for their Learning, yet may I venture to affirm, that there are some among them, who can never be suppos'd, to have been corrupted by Play-houses, who yet turn up a Bottle oftner than they do an Hour-glass, who box about a pair of Tables with more fervour than they do

do their Cushions, contemplate a pair of Dice more frequently than the Fathers or Councils, and meditate and depend upon Hazard, more than they do upon Providence.

And as for that unnatural sin, which is another growing vice of the Age, it would be monstrous to urge that it is in the least encourag'd by the Stage, for it is either never mention'd there, or mention'd with the last detestation.

And now lastly, for the Love of Women, fomented by the Corruption, and not by the genuine Art of the Stage; tho the augmenting and nourishing it cannot be defended, yet it may be in some measure excus'd.

1. Because it has more of Nature, and consequently more Temptation, and consequently less Malice, than the preceding three, which the Drama does not encourage.

2. Because it has a check upon the other Vices, and peculiarly upon that unnatural sin, in the restraining of which the happiness of mankind is in so evident a manner concern'd.

So that of the four moral reigning vices, the Stage encourages but one, which, as it has been prov'd to be the least of them all, so is it the least contagious, and the least universal. For in the Country, Fornication and Adultery are seldom heard of, whereas Drunkenness rages in almost every house there : From all which it appears, how very unreasonable it is, to charge the lewdness of the times upon the Stage, when it is evident, that of the four reigning moral vices, the Stage encourages but one, and that the least of the four, and the least universal, and a vice which has a check upon the other three, and particularly upon that amongst them, which is most opposite and most destructive to the happiness of mankind.

C A A P.



## C H A P. IV.

*The Objections from Authority  
answer'd.*

I N the next place we come to answer the objections which Mr *Collier* has brought from Authority. The Authorities which he has produc'd are indeed very numerous, yet only four of them can be reduc'd under this head, without running into confusion, two Poets and two Philosophers.

The Poets are *Ovid* and Mr. *Wycherley*; the Philosophers, *Plutarch* and *Seneca*.

The first of them is *Ovid*, in his Book *De Arte Amandi*, and in his Book *De Remedio Amoris*. We have already answer'd the last in the preceding Chapter, and shall now say something to the first. The passage is this :

*Sed*

*Sed Tu precipue Curvis Venare Theatris  
Hæc loca sunt votis Fertiliora tuis.  
Illic invenies quod ames, quod Ludere possis  
Quodq; semel Tangas quodq; Tenere velis.*

From whence Mr Collier makes this shrewd Remark, that the Theatre is the properest place in the world to meet, or to find a Mistress, and that several people go thither on purpose. In answer to this, I desire the Reader to peruse the Verses which precede.

*Nec Fuge niligine Memphitica Templâ Ju-  
vence  
Multas illa facit quod fuit illa Jovi.*

And have we not here a merry person? who brings an Authority against going to Theatres, which is as direct against going to Church? Nay, and upon the very same account too. But the Poet speaks here of a Heathen Temple, says Mr Collier. Well, and so he does of a Heathen Theatre. But what he says of the Roman Theatre is exactly applicable to ours. And what Reply can be made to that, says Mr Collier? What? Why

Why I wish to God that no Reply could be made to it. But besides, if several people go to our Theatres purposely to meet, or to find out a Mistress, I think it is plain that if there were no Theatres, they would go to other places: Especially since, as we hinted above, when the Theatres are shut, they frequent other Assemblies upon the same designs. But tho some people go to the Theatre to meet their Mistresses, yet it is evident that most go to see the Play, who, if they could not have that diversion, would not improbably go to other places with far worse intentions.

The next who is produc'd against the Stage is Mr *Wycherley*, much, I dare say, against the assent either of his will or his understanding. But only for a jest in that admirable Epistle, which is prefix'd to the *Plain Dealer*. However, even that jest, let it be never so much restrain'd, can never be brought to convince us of any thing but the abuses of the Theatre, which I do not pretend to defend; and I thought Mr *Wycherley* had more than made amends for it, by exposing Adultery, and making

## of the Stage.

king it the immediate cause of *Olivia's* misfortune, in that excellent Play, which is a most instructive and a most noble Satyr, upon the hypocrisie and villany of Mankind.

Mr *Wycherley* being indeed almost the only man alive, who has made Comedy instructive in its Fable ; almost all the rest being contented to instruct by their characters. But what Mr *Collier* has said of Mr *Wycherley* is sufficient to shew us what Candour, nay, and what Justice we are to expect from this censurer of the Stage. For in giving Mr *Wycherley's* Character, he has shewn himself invidious and detracting even in his commendation. For the best thing that he can afford to say of the greatest of our Comick Wits, is, that he is a man of good sense. Which puts me in mind of a Father in France overhearing his Son saying of the Marechal de *Turenne*. *Ma foi, Je trouve Monsieur de Turenne un joly Homme : Et vous mon fils.* He replies the Father, *je vous trouve un joly sot de parler ainsi, De plus grand Homme que la France a parte.* How unworthy was it to commend Mr *Wycherley* for a thing, which, tho  
cer-



certainly he has in a very great degree, yet is common to him with a thousand more; and to take no notice of those extraordinary qualities which are peculiar to him alone, his Wit, his Penetration, his Satyr, his Art, his Characters, and above all, that incomparable Vivacity, by which he has happily equal'd the Ancients, and surpass'd the Moderns?

But now let us pass to the Philosophers, I mean the Philosophers who were not Poets; for no man can be a good Poet who is not a Philosopher. He has cited *Plutarch* in four several places in his *Symposiacum*; his Book *De Audiendis Poetis*; his Treatise *De gloria Atheniensium*; and his *Laconick Institutions*: For the two last we shall say nothing to them, till we come to speak of government. In the two first Mr *Collier* makes *Plutarch* say, that Plays are dangerous to corrupt young people, and therefore Stage-poetry, when it grows too hardy, and licentious, ought to be check'd. But I make no doubt but to make it appear, that Mr *Collier* has been guilty of three things in this very action, which are unworthy the Candour of a Gentleman, or of a man of Letters.

Letters. First, he has brought an Authority, which can only convince us that this Philosopher did not approve of the licentiousness of the Stage, which licentiousness we by no means design to defend: such an Authority, I say, he has brought in a Chapter, design'd to shew that the Ancients disapprov'd of Plays, and the Stage in general. Secondly, he has made use of the Authority of *Plutarch* against the Stage, whereas that Philosopher has said infinitely more in its behalf, than he has against it. Thirdly, he has from two tracts of *Plutarch* har'd one citation upon us, in the way of an argument, which is very unlike the reasoning of that Philosopher. For in the first part of the Enthyme, he makes *Plutarch* damn the Stage, and the Drama in general; and in the second conclude against them in particular. For Plays, says he, that is, all Plays, are dangerous to corrupt young people, and therefore some Plays ought to be check'd. And why does Mr *Collier* make the Philosopher argue after this Jesuitical manner, when it is plain to any Reader, that has but common apprehension, that

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since

since in the second part of the *Euthy-  
mene*, *Plutarch* condemn'd only some  
particular Plays; he only said in the  
first part of it, that some particular  
Plays were dangerous. But let us pro-  
ceed to *Seneca*. And since it highly  
concerns us to give a full and satis-  
factory account of what is objected  
from him, let us cite him at length, as  
*Mr Collier* translates him. *Seneca* com-  
plains heartily of the extravagance and  
debauchery of the Age: And how forward  
people were to improve in that which was  
naught. That scarce any body would ap-  
ply themselves to the study of Nature and  
Morality, unless when the Play-house was  
shut, or the weather foul. That there was  
no body to teach Philosophy, because there  
was no body to learn it. But that the  
Stage had nurseries, and company enough.  
This misapplication of Time and Fancy,  
made Knowledge in so ill a condition.  
This was the cause the Hints of Antiquity  
were no better pursued; that some inven-  
tions were sunk, and that some inventions  
grew downwards, rather than otherwise.  
To which I answer, First, that it is not  
likely that *Seneca* should condemn the  
Drama and the Stage in general, since  
it

it is so notoriously known that he writes Plays himself. Secondly, that by what he says it is evident that he declaims only against the abuses of the Theatre; and those such abuses as have no relation to ours; as for example, the passing whole days together in the Theatre, which the *Romans* oftentimes did. Thirdly, that if Mr *Collier* would infer from hence, that our Theatres are hindrances to the advancement of Learning, we have nothing to do but affirm what all the world must consent to, that Learning is now at a greater height than ever it was known in *England*.

What we have said is sufficient to confound Mr *Collier*, but we will not be contented with that; for here we triumph, here we insult, here we have a just occasion to shew the admirable advantage of the Stage to Letters, and the incomparable excellency of the Drama, and in a more peculiar manner of Tragedy, which seems purposely form'd and design'd for the raising the mind, and firing it to that noble emulation, which is so absolutely necessary for the improvement of Arts. This is



a truth which is confirm'd by the experience of all Nations, of all Ages. For whether we look upon the Ancients or Moderns, whether we consider the *Athenians* or *Romans*, or the *French* or our selves, we shall find that Arts and Sciences have for the most part begun, but all of them at least begun to prosper with the Stage, and that as they have flourish'd, they have at last declin'd with it. And this we may affirm, not only of the the more human Arts, Poetry, History, Eloquence, of which the Theatre is certainly the best School in the world; the School that form'd in a great measure those prodigious Disciples, *Cicero* and *Demosthenes*, but we may truly assert it of all other sorts of Learning.

For before *Thespis* appear'd in *Attica*, and reduc'd the Drama to some sort of form, which had nothing but confusion before him, they had neither Author nor Knowledge amongst them, that could be esteem'd by posterity: That little knowledge which they had of Nature is to us ridiculous. For Moral Philosophy, they had no such thing, nor Orator nor Historian. But as soon as  
after

after *Thespis* their Theatre began to flourish, all their extraordinary men, in all these sorts, appear'd almost together. Not only those who adorn'd the Stage, as *Æschylus*, *Euripides*, and the divine *Sophocles*; but those Orators, Philosophers and Historians, who have since been the wonders of all posterity, *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Xenophon*, *Aristotle*, *Pericles*, *Thucydides*, *Demosthenes*, *Æschines*; and of all their famous Authors who have descended to us, there was not one that I can think of, but who was alive between the first appearing of *Thespis*, and the death of *Sophocles*. And be it said in a more particular manner for the honour of the Stage, that they had no such thing as Moral Philosophy before the Drama flourish'd. *Socrates* was the first, who out of their Theatre began to form their manners. And be it said, to the immortal honour of Tragedy, that the first and greatest of all the Moral Philosophers, not only frequented their Theatres, but was employ'd in writing Tragedies.

And as among the *Athenians*, Eloquence, History, and Philosophy, I

speak of the moral, which is the only solid certain Philosophy, appear'd and flourish'd upon the flourishing of the Stage, so with the Stage they at last declin'd, for not one of their famous writers has descended to us, who liv'd after the Drama was come to perfection, that is, after the full establishment of the new Comedy.

As Dramatick Poetry was the first kind of writing that appear'd among the *Athenians*, so I defy the most skillful man in antiquity, to name so much as one Author among the *Romans* till Dramatick Poetry appear'd at *Rome*, introduc'd by *Livius Andronicus*, above five hundred years after the building of the City. But when their Stage began to be cultivated, immediately a hundred writers arose, in Poetry, Eloquence, History, and Philosophy, whose Fame took an equal flight with that of the *Roman* Eagles, and who, transmitting their immortal works to posterity, continue the living glories of that Republick, and the only solid remains of the *Roman* greatness. As with the *Roman* Stage the rest of their Arts were cultivated, and improv'd proportionably;

tionably ; as with that in the Age of *Augustus Caesar*, about two hundred years from the time of *Livius Andronicus*, they reach'd their utmost height, so with that they declin'd in the Reigns of succeeding Emperors.

For the *French*, 'tis yet scarce a hundred years since *Hardy* first appear'd among them : And *Hardy* was the first who began to reform their Stage, and to recover it from the confusion in which it lay before him. And tho I cannot say, that before that time the *French* had no good writers, yet I may safely affirm, that they had but one, who was generally esteem'd throughout the rest of *Europe* : But to reckon all who have since been excellent in Poetry, Eloquence, History and Philosophy, would certainly make a very long and a very illustrious Roll.

'Tis time to come at last to our selves : It was first in the Reign of King *Henry* the Eighth that the Drama grew into form with us : It was establish'd in the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, and flourish'd in that of King *James* the First. And tho I will not presume to affirm, that before the Reign of King



## The Usefulness

*Henry* the Eighth we had no good Writers, yet I will confidently assert, that, excepting *Chaucer*, no not in any sort of Writing whatever, we had not a first rate Writer. But immediately upon the establishment of the Drama, three prodigies of Wit appear'd all at once, as it were so many Suns to amaze the learned world. The Reader will immediately comprehend that I speak of *Spencer*, *Bacon* and *Raleigh*; three mighty geniases, so extraordinary in their different ways, that not only *England* had never seen the like before, but they almost continue to this very day, in spite of emulation, in spite of time, the greatest of our Poets, Philosophers and Historians.

From the time of King *James* the First the Drama flourish'd, and the Arts were cultivated, till the beginning of our intestine broils, in the Reign of King *Charles* the First; when the Dramatick Muse was banish'd, and all the Arts degraded. For what other sort of Poets flourish'd in those days? who were the inspir'd, the celebrated men? Why *Withers*, *Pryn*, *Vickers*, Fellows whose verses were laborious  
 Libels

Libels upon the Art and themselves. These were the first rate Poets, and under them flourish'd a herd of Scribblers of obscurer infamy: Wretches, who had not desert enough to merit even contempt; whose works, like abortions, never beheld the light, stifled in the dark by their own friends, as so many scandals upon humane nature, and lamentable effects of that universal conspiracy of Fools against Right Reason. And if any one pretends that Sir John Denham, Sir William Davenant, Mr. Waller and Mr. Cowley writ many of their Verses in the time of the late Civil Wars; to him I answer, that what Mr. Waller writ was but very little, and the other three are notoriously known to have writ in a Country, where the Stage and Learning flourish'd. So that nothing among us that was considerable was produc'd in Poetry in the times of the late Civil Wars, if you except but the first part of that admirable Satyr against the Muses mortal foe Hypocrisie, which yet neither did nor durst appear till the restoration of the Drama.

We

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We have seen what the Poets were that flourish'd in those dismal times, let us now see what were the Orators? who were the cry'd up Preachers? why *Calamy, Case, Hugh Peters, Manton, Sibbs*. But what was produc'd in the other Sciences, that was worthy of Posterity? what in Philosophy? what in History? what in Mathematicks? what could be expected when only hypocritical fools were encourag'd, whose abominable canting was christn'd Gift, and their dulness Grace.

But what sort of persons have flourish'd among us since the restoration of the Drama? Who have been they who have signaliz'd themselves in the other kinds of Poetry? So great is the number of those who have writ politely, that it is comprehensive of all conditions of men. How many have been justly Renown'd for Eloquence. So many extraordinary men have distinguish'd themselves by preaching, that to enumerate them would be an endless thing. I shall content my self with mentioning the late Archbishop and the present Bishop of *Rocheſter*, ſo illuſtrious for their different Talents, the  
one

One for his extream politeness, for his grace and his delicacy, the other for his nervous force, and both for their masculine purity. Who among us are fam'd for History? not only the last of those great Prelates, but the present Bishop of *Salisbury*, whose History of the Reformation is so deservedly celebrated by the learned world, wherever *English* or *French* is known. What proficients have we in Philosophy? what in Mathematicks? Let all *Europe* reply, who has read, and reading admir'd them. I shall content my self with mentioning two of the living Glories of *England*, Mr *Newton* and Mr *Lock*, the one of which has not his equal in *Europe*, and neither of them has his superiour.

Thus have I shown you, how Poetry, Eloquence, History, and Philosophy, have appear'd, advanc'd, declin'd, and vanish'd with the Drama, not only in *Greece* and ancient *Italy*, but in modern *France* and *England*. So true it is, what was formerly so well said, that all those Arts which respect humanity, have a certain alliance, and a mutual dependance, and are defended and  
sup.



*The Usefulness*

supported by their common confederacy.

Thus while I am pleading in defence of the Stage, I am defending and supporting Poetry, the best and the noblest kind of writing. For all other Writers are ~~are~~ made by Precept, and are form'd by Art; but a Poet prevails by the force of Nature, is excited by all that's powerful in Humanity, and is sometimes by a Spirit not his own exalted to Divinity.

For if Poetry in other Countries has flourish'd with the Stage, and been with that neglected, what must become of it here in *England* if the Stage is ruin'd; for foreign Poets have found their publick and their private Patrons. They who excell'd in *Greece* were encourag'd by the *Athenian* Stage, nay and, by all *Greece* assembled at their *Olympian*, *Istmean*, *Nemean*, *Pythian* Games. *Rome* had its *Scipios*, its *Cæsars*, and its *Mecenas*, *France* had its magnanimous *Richlieu*, and its greater *Lewis*, but the protection that Poetry has found in *England*, has been from the Stage alone. Some few indeed of our private men have had Souls that have  
been

been large enough, and wanted only power. But of our Princes, how few have had any taste of Arts; nay, and of them who had some, have had their Heads too full, and some their Souls too narrow.

As then in maintaining the cause of the Stage, I am defending Poetry in general; so in defending that I am pleading for Eloquence, for History and Philosophy. I am pleading for the reasonable pleasures of mankind, the only harmless, the only cheap, the only universal pleasures; the nourishments of Youth, and the delights of Age, the ornaments of Prosperity, and the surest Sanctuaries of Adversity, now insolently attempted by furious zeal too wretchedly blind to see their beauties, or discern their innocence. For unless the Stage be encouraged in *England*, Poetry cannot subsist; for never was any man a great Poet, who did not make it his business as well as pleasure and solely abandon himself to that. And as Poetry would be crush'd by the ruins of the Stage; so Eloquence would be miserably maim'd by them; for which, if action be confess'd the life of it, the  
Thea-

Theatre is certainly the best of Schools; and if action be not the life of it, *Demosthenes* was much mistaken.

In Eloquence I humbly conceive that the Pulpit is something concern'd, and by consequence in the Stage; and need not be asham'd to learn from that place which instructed *Cicero*, and which form'd *Demosthenes*. For I cannot forbear declaring, notwithstanding the extream veneration which I have for the Church of *England*, that if in some of our Pulpits, we had but persons that had half the excellence of *Demosthenes*, that had but half the force of his words, and the resistless strength of his Reasoning, and but half his vehement action, we should see quite another effect of their Sermons. Those divine Orators fulminating with their sacred Thunder, would infix terrible plagues in the souls of sinners, and rotize and awake to a new life even those who are dead in sin.

I now come to answer what is objected from Religion; and that is, that tho it should be granted that some little happiness may be deriv'd from the Stage, yet that there is a much better  
and

and surer way to be happy : For the only way to be solidly and lastingly happy even in this life, is to be truly Religious, the best Christian being always the happiest man. To which I answer, That as the Christian Religion contains the best, nay, the only means to bring men to eternal happiness, so for the making men happy ev'n in this life, it surpasses all Philosophy ; but yet I confidently assert, that if the Stage were arriv'd to that degree of purity, to which in the space of some little time it may easily be brought, the frequenting our Theatres would advance Religion, and consequently the happiness of mankind, and so become a part of the Christian duty, which I shall demonstrate when I come to speak of Religion.

*The end of the First Part.*

T H E



to be happy: for the  
 to be happy and lasting  
 in this life is to be truly  
 the best Christian being a  
 the Christian man, to which I  
 that as the Christian Religion  
 the only means  
 to bring man to eternal happiness, to  
 ordering man's happiness even in this  
 life, it requires all Philosophy; but  
 to I confidently assert that if the stages  
 were added to that degree of purity,  
 to which in the space of some little  
 time it may easily be brought, the tri-  
 gumentary and Theoretic would advance  
 Religion, and consequently the happi-  
 ness of mankind, and so become a part  
 of the Christian duty, which I shall de-  
 monstrate when I come to speak of  
 Religion.

The end of the First Part

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THE  
USEFULNESS  
OF THE  
STAGE.

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PART II.

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CHAP. I.

*That the Stage is useful to  
Government.*

SINCE in the first part of this Treatise, we have plainly demonstrated that the Stage is instrumental to the  
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*The Usefulness*

happiness of Mankind, and of *Englishmen* more particularly ; and since it is self-evident, that the happiness of those who are govern'd, is the very end and design of a'l regular Government, it evidently follows, that the Stage which contributes to the happiness of particular men, is conducive to the good of the State. However, I shall descend to shew more particularly, that the Stage is instrumental to the welfare,

First, Of Government in general.

Secondly, of the *English* Government more particularly.

Thirdly, Especially of the present Government.

First, The Stage is instrumental to the welfare of Government in general ; which I shall prove,

1. By Reason : And,
2. By Experience.

And first I shall prove by Reason, that the Stage is instrumental to the welfare of Government, and that whether you consider those who govern,

vern, or secondly, those who are governed.

First, If you consider those who govern.

And here it is self-evident, that no man who governs, can govern amiss, as long as he follows the dictates of common Reason. That requires that all who govern, shou'd consult the interest of those who are govern'd, which is inclusive of their own. And those Rulers have always been upon a wrong foundation, who have had an interest distinct from that of their people. Male-administration has always its source from the passions or vices of those who govern.

The passions which cause it, are for the most part Ambition, or the immoderate love of pleasure. Now as Tragedy checks the first, by shewing the great ones of the Earth humbled, so it corrects the last by firing the mind and raising it to something nobler.

The vices which cause the Male-administration of Governours, are either vices of weakness or of malice, the first



*The Usefulness*

of which cause Governours to neglect, and the last, to oppress their people. The vices of weakness are inconsiderateness, and effeminacy, inconstancy, and irresolution.

Now nothing can be a better Remedy than Tragedy for inconsiderateness, which reminds men of their duty, and perpetually instructs them, either by its fable or by its sentences, and shews them the ill and the fatal consequences of irregular administration; and nothing is more capable of raising the Soul, and giving it that greatness, that courage, that force, and that constancy which are the qualifications that make men deserve to command others; which is evident from experience. For they who in all Countries and in all Ages have appear'd most to feel the power of Tragedy, have been the most deserving and the greatest of men. *Æschylus* among the *Athenians*, was a great Captain, as well as a Tragick Poet; and *Sophocles* was both an able Statesman and a Victorious General. If we look among the *Romans*, the very greatest among them, were particularly they who appear'd so far touch'd by the

the Drama, as either to write their Plays themselves, or to build their Theatre. Witness *Scipio*, and *Lelius*, and *Lucullus*, and the Great *Pompey*, and *Mecenas*, and *Julius* and *Augustus Caesar*.

No man among the *French* has shewn so much capacity or so much greatness of mind as *Richlieu*; and no man among them has express'd so much passion for the Drama; which was so great, that he writ several Plays himself, with that very hand, which at the same time was laying the Plan of the *French* universal Monarchy

Among us the Drama began to flourish in the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, and I have been told, that that great Princess appear'd to be so far charm'd with it, as to translate with her own hand a Tragedy from *Euripides*.

That vice of malice which for the most part causes the male-administration of Governours is cruelty, which nothing is more capable of correcting than Tragedy, which by diving into the hidden Springs of Nature, and making use of all that is powerful in her, in order to the moving compassion, has

been always found sufficient to soften the most obdurate heart.

Numerous examples might be brought of this, but I shall content my self with that of *Alexander the Thesſalian Tyrant*, as the ſtory is related by *Dacier*, in the Preface to his Admirable Comment on the Poetick of *Aristotle*. *This barbarous man, ſays Dacier, cauſing the Hecuba of Euripides to be play'd before him, found himſelf ſo touch'd that he went out before the end of the firſt Act, ſeeing it would be a ſhame for him to be ſeen to ſhed tears for the miſeries of Hecuba, or the calamities of Polyxena, for him who every day embrued his hands in the innocent blood of his Subjects. The truth of it was, that he had ſome apprehenſion; leſt he ſhould be ſo far melted, that he ſhould be forſaken by that ſpirit of Tyranny, which had ſo long poſſeſſed him, and ſhould go a private perſon out of that Theatre, into the which he had entered a Sovereign. Nay, he had like to have cauſ'd the Actor who had mov'd him thus, to be executed; but the Criminal was ſecur'd by the very remains of that compaſſion, which was his only crime.*

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That which follows is remarkable, and which *Dacier* cites from an ancient Historian. A very grave Writer, says *Dacier*, makes a reflection which is very much to my purpose, and which seems of importance to Government. Speaking of the inhabitants of *Arcadia*, he says, that their humanity, and the sweetness of their tempers, and the respect which they had for the Gods; and in a word, the purity of their manners, and all their virtues proceeded principally from the love which they had for Musick, which by its sweetness corrected those ill impressions, which a raw and unwholesom air, together with the hardship which they endured by their laborious way of life, made on their bodies and on their minds. And he says on the contrary, that those of *Cynethus* were carried to all sorts of profligate crimes, because that they, renouncing the wise institutions of their ancestors, had neglected an art which was therefore the more necessary for them, because they inhabited that part of *Arcadia*, which was the coldest, and where the Climate was most unequal. Indeed, there was no Town in all Greece, says *Dacier*, that had given such frequent examples of enormous crimes.

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And if *Polybius*, says he, speaks this in the behalf of Musick, and accuses *Ephorus* for having advanc'd a thing that was very unworthy of him, in asserting that Musick was invented on purpose for the deceiving of Mankind, what may we not justly affirm of Tragedy, of which Musick is but a little ornament; and which as far transcends it, as the reasoning Speech of a man excels the Brutes inarticulate voice, which never has any meaning

But now we come in the second place, to shew that the Stage is useful to Government, with respect to those who are governed, and that whether you consider them in relation to those who govern them, or to one another, or to the common Enemy.

If you consider them in relation to those who govern them, you will find that Tragedy is very proper to check the motions, that they may at any time feel to rebellion or disobedience, by stopping the very sources of them; for Tragedy naturally checks their Ambition, by shewing them the great ones of the Earth humbled, by setting before their Eyes, to make use of Mr *Collier's* words,

words, the uncertainty of human greatness, the sudden turns of State, and the unhappy conclusion of violence and injustice. Tragedy too, diverts their apprehension of grievances, by the delight which it gives them, discovers the designs of their factious guides, by opening their eyes, and instructing them in their duty by the like examples; and lastly, it dispels their unreasonable jealousies, for people who are melted or terrified with the sufferings of the great, which are set before their eyes, are rather apt to feel a secret pleasure, from the sense that they have, that they are free from the like calamities, than to torment themselves with the vain and uncertain apprehensions of futurity. But the Stage is useful to Government in those who are govern'd, if they are consider'd with relation to one another. For Tragedy diverts them from their unjust designs, by the pleasure which it gives them; since no man as long as he is easie himself, is in a humour to disturb others, and by purging those passions, whose excesses cause their injustice, by instructing them in their duty

duty by its fable and by its sentences, by raising their minds, and setting them above injustice, by touching them with compassion, and making them good upon a principle of self-love; and lastly, by terrifying them with setting before their eyes, the unhappy conclusion, to use *Mt Collier's* words, of violence and injustice.

Thirdly, The Stage is useful to Government, by having an influence over those who are govern'd, in relation to the common enemy. For nothing more raises and exalts their minds, and fires them with a noble emulation, who shall best perform their duty: which brings me to the second Head, the shewing the usefulness of the Stage to Government in general, from

• II. Experience, and that of

1. The *Athenian*.
2. The *Roman*.
3. The *French*, and
4. The *English* Government.

1. For the *Athenians*, their Drama first appear'd in form with *Thespis*, was cultivated by *Æschylus*, and perfected by *Sophocles*. Now this is extremely remarkable, that that people, which

which from *Thesew* to *Thespis*, that is, for the space of about seven hundred years, continued a poor and ignorant, and comparatively a contemptible people; in the space of a hundred years more, in which time their Tragedy was form'd by *Thespis*, cultivated by *Æschylus*, and perfected by *Sophocles*; I say, it is extremely remarkable, that in that space of time, this people, which before were so inconsiderable, became illustrious for Arts and Arms, renown'd for Eloquence, for Philosophy famous, and for Empire formidable, the masters of Greece, the scourges of Asia, and the Terror of the great King.

In that space of time flourish'd most of their mighty Conquerors, *Cimon*, *Aristides*, *Pericles*, *Themistocles* and *Miltiades*. Their Tragick Poets were the persons who animated their Armies, and fir'd the souls of those brave men, who conquer'd at once and dy'd for their Country, in the Bay of *Salamis*, and in the Plains of *Marathon*; at which place a handful of men, as it were, of the disciples of *Thespis* and the succeeding Poets, vanquish'd the numberless forces



forces of the East, laid the foundation of the *Grecian Empire*, and of the fortune of the great *Alexander*.

The *Athenians* were highly sensible of the advantage which the State receiv'd from the Theatre, which they maintain'd at a publick prodigious expence, and a Revenue appropriated to that peculiar use; and establish'd a Law, which made the least attempt to alienate the Fund capital. So that when the common Exchequer was exhausted, *Demosthenes* was oblig'd to use the utmost address to induce them to touch and divert this separate Fund.

But 'tis time to come to the *Romans*. *Livius Andronicus*, who was their first Dramatick Poet, appear'd in the five hundred and fourteenth year after the building of the City. And till his time they had been struggling as it were for life with their neighbours, and had been torn by perpetual convulsions within themselves; whereas after the first representation of the Plays which were written by him, they were not only quiet within themselves for above a hundred years after, but in a hundred more became the Masters of the Universe.

verse. And who were the persons among them that advanced their Conquests, and extended their Empire? Why the very men who built their Theatres and who writ their Plays. Scipio, conquer'd Spain and Africa, Pompey and Lucullus Asia, and Cesar England, Flanders, France, and Germany.

'Tis not above a hundred years ago, since Dramatick Poetry begun to flourish in France, since which time the French have not only been remarkably united, but have advanced their Conquests so fast, that they have almost doubled their Empire.

Cardinal Richelieu was the person who at the same time laid the foundation of the greatness of their Theatre and their Empire: And 'tis a surprizing thing to consider, that the spirit of Dramatick Poetry leaving them just before the beginning of the last War, by Moliere and Corneille's Death, and by Racine's Age, they have since that time lost almost half their Conquests.

To come home to our selves, Dramatick Poetry began to be brought into form with us, in the time of Henry the

the Eighth, and tho since that time we cannot boast of such glorious successes, as we had in the times of our Fifth Henry and of our Third Edward, when the Conquering Genius of England in triumph seem'd to bestride the Ocean, and to fix an Imperial foot on the Continent; yet this may be said to the advantage of the Drama, that since it first began to be cultivated, we have had our eyes more open, have found that our constitution is but ill design'd for conquest; that by being very fortunate we should run the risk of becoming very unhappy, and endanger our Liberties, by extending our Empire.

C H A P.

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CHAP. II.

*That the Stage is particularly  
useful to the English, and  
especially the present Go-  
vernment.*

**WE** have shewn in the foregoing Chapter, that the Drama, and particularly Tragedy, is among other reasons useful to Government, because it is proper to restrain a people from rebellion and disobedience, and to keep them in good correspondence among themselves: For this reason the Drama may be said to be instrumental in a peculiar manner to the welfare of the *English* Government; because there is no people on the face of the Earth so prone to rebellion as the *English*, or so apt to quarrel among themselves. And this seems very remarkable, that  
since



since the Drama began first to flourish among us, we have been longer at quiet than ever we were before since the Conquest; and the only Civil War which has been amongst us since that time, is notoriously known to have been began and carry'd on by those who had an utter aversion to the Stage; as on the other side, he who now discovers so great an aversion to the Stage, has notoriously done all that lay in his little power to plunge us in another Civil War.

But the Stage is more particularly instrumental to the welfare of our present *English* Government, as the Government is depending upon two things, 1. The Reformation, and 2. The Revolution. I shall speak of the Reformation when I come to treat of Religion. I shall shew at present that the Stage is advantageous to the Government, as it stands since the Revolution; and that will appear, if we consider what people they are who frequent our Theatres. And they are either friends to the Government, or enemies, or indifferent persons. They who are friends to it, are for the most part so, because

it, defends and maintains the liberties of the people. But liberty is a jest if you take away reasonable pleasure; for what would signifie liberty, if it did not make me happier than him who is not free?

*Machiavel* says, in the 19th Chapter of his *Prince*, that nothing renders a Prince so odious, as the taking possession of the Wives and Estates of his people, that is, nothing renders him so odious as the depriving his Subjects of their lawful and reasonable pleasures; for no man's Wife or Estate is dear to him any further than as they contribute to his pleasure and to his happiness. Now that the Drama is of the number of lawful and reasonable pleasures, has been, and shall be prov'd; and has been all along implied, not by the connivance, but by the authority and the command of so many of our Monarchs, the protection of so many illustrious Princes, and the support and encouragement of so many extraordinary men, who have compos'd for so long together the great Council of the Nation, whose united judgments ought

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certainly

certainly to be preferr'd before the pretended opinions of two or three unknown Bigots, who, under the austerity of their affected grimaces, are carrying forward their dark designs, and could never do a thing upon which they would esteem themselves more, than upon depriving the Government of any of its faithful Friends. And it is more than probable, that some of its friends would prove averse to it, if the Stage were either suppress'd or very much discourag'd. But in the next place, the Stage is of use to the Government, if you consider its Enemies; for it gives the Enemies of the State a considerable diversion. People will not so furiously desire a change, as long as they live agreeably. Men must be uneasie some way or other in their manner of living, before they come to private cabals and plotting. They who are happy appear averse to them, and to frequenting Jacobite Conventicles, and to contributing to our non-swearing Parsons. *Hinc illæ Lachrymæ*; from hence comes the impotent rage of our foes, from hence their dissem-  
bled

bled zeal; for as long as the enemies of the State are diverted by publick spectacles, their seditious Preachers must be in a wretched condition.

But farther, the Stage is beneficial to the present Government, if you consider a third sort of people who daily frequent it, and they are such who are always indifferent what Government they live under, so they can live but agreeably. Now these are of all others the most addicted to their pleasures, and would take it most heinously to be depriv'd of them.

Thus is the Stage beneficial to the present Government, if you consider those who are friends to it, or enemies, or indifferent. And the same may appear, from considering them all together. For nothing tends to the uniting men more, than the bringing them frequently together, and the pleasing them when they are assembled.

Thus have we shewn, that the Stage is beneficial to the *English* Government, and more particularly to the present Government; and that from the nature of the people, and the consideration



ration of those who frequent our Theatres ; we come now to answer what has been, or what may be objected from Reason, from Authority, and from Religion.

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C H A P.

### CHAP. III.

#### *The Objections from Authority Answer'd.*

**W**E will begin with the objections which are brought from Authority; the Authorities are numerous which Mr. Collier has produced in the last Chapter of his Book; which Chapter is levell'd against the Stage and Dramatick Poetry in general, as any one may see by perusing the first Paragraph. Now I would fain ask Mr. Collier one question, whether the business of Plays is not to recommend Virtue and discountenance Vice, and to bring every thing that is ill under infamy and neglect; whether the Poets, if they pleas'd, might not be serviceable to this purpose? And the Stage be very significant? What will he say to this? Will he deny it? Why then did he affirm

It in these very words in his Introduction to his Book? Well, will he confess it? Then why this pedantick scrawl of Authorities, to oppose the truth? or of what significance is Human Authority against Human Reason? But yet, to shew the ungenerous temper of this adversary to Dramatick Poetry, and consequently to Human Learning, I shall make it appear, that of all the Authorities which he has produc'd, several make in defence of the Stage, and not one of them makes against it.

The objections are of two sorts. Those opinions of particular Statesmen, and the sentiments of States in general. We shall answer the Authorities which are brought from both, in the same order as they are cited by Mr. *Collier*.

The two first which he brings are *Plato* and *Xenophon*, in the 234th Page. *Plato*, says Mr *Collier*, has banish'd Plays from his Commonwealth: But what can be concluded from thence? That they ought to be expell'd from the *English* Government? When every body knows that the Commonwealth of *Plato* is a meer Romantick notion, with which human nature, and human life,

life, and by consequence Dramatick Poetry, cannot possibly agree. *Machiavil* may give a solid answer to this in the fifteenth Chapter of his *Prince*. *Some men*, says he, *have form'd States and Sovereignties in their own fancies, such as never were, and as never will be.* But the distance is so very great between what men are, and between what they ought to be, that the Statesman who leaves that which is, to follow that which ought to be, seeks his own destruction rather than his preservation. And by consequence, he who makes profession of being perfectly good, among too many others who are not perfectly so, sooner or later must certainly perish.

But what has thus exasperated *Plato* against the Drama? Why it raises the passions, says he, and is by consequence an Enemy to Morality. But *Aristotle*, who, as *Mr Collier* in this very page unhappily owns, saw as far into human nature as any man; *Aristotle* has declar'd, that Tragedy, by exciting the passions purges them, and reduces them to a just mediocrity, and is by consequence a promoter of virtue.



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As *Plato* has laid the Plan of a notional Commonwealth, *Xenophon* has given an account in his *Cyropedia* of a Romantick Monarchy; in which he says, that the *Persians* would not suffer their youth to hear any thing that was Amorous or Tawdry. But what can this man mean by bringing this as an authority against the Stage, and the Drama in general: For can any one be so absurd as to imagin, that this was intended by *Xenophon* to condemn the gravity, and severity, and majesty of *Euripides's* Plays? Those Plays which are said to be in part the productions of the wisest and most virtuous of all the Philosophers, of *Xenophon's* honour'd incomparable Master, *Socrates*.

The next, whose Authority is produc'd, is *Aristotle*; produc'd? for what? why to overthrow the Authority of that very sort of Writing, which is establish'd upon his own rules. Well! And what says *Aristotle*! Why in his Politicks he lays it down for a rule, that the Law ought to forbid young people the seeing of Comedies. Such permissions not being safe, till age

age and discipline had form'd them in sobriety, fortify'd their virtue, and made it as it were proof against Debauchery. And what are these words of *Aristotle* cited to shew ? Why that Plays in general are the nurseries of Vice, the corruption of youth, and the grievance of the Country, where they are suffer'd ; for that was the thing which in the first Paragraph of this sixth Chapter, Mr *Collier* propounded to shew. Now can any thing in nature be more unreasonable than this ?

For in the first place it can never be, no, not so much as pretended, that *Aristotle* in this place requires the forbidding any thing but only Comedy, which is but one sort of Dramatick Poetry ; nor can it be so much as pretended, that he requires, that this should be forbidden to any but Boys. Nor, secondly, is it probable that *Aristotle* meant this of any thing but only that sort of ancient Comedy, which has no resemblance with ours. for I have two reasons to perswade me, that *Aristotle* meant this of only the old  
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and



and the middle Comedy. The first reason is, that in all likelihood *Aristotle* writ his Politicks while he was Governour to *Alexander*, which was before the establishment of the new Comedy. For *Aristotle* in his Morals commends the reservedness of the new Comedy, which may appear from Mr *Collier's* citation in the 160th page of this very Book. The second reason is, That I can hardly believe that *Aristotle* would have left rules for the writing of Comedy, if he had believ'd that Comedy in general is a Corrupter of Youth. What then *Aristotle* in all probability meant only of the horrible licence of the old and middle Comedy, which yet he requires to be forbidden only to Boys, is here implied to be levelled against Dramatick Poetry in general; when this very Philosopher has declared, that nothing is more proper than Tragedy for the entertainment even of youth, pronouncing it more grave and more moral than History, and more instructive than Philosophy.

The

The next who enters the Lists is *Cicero*, who, as Mr *Collier* assures us, crys out upon licentious Plays and Poems, as the bane of sobriety and wise thinking, and says, that Comedy subsists upon Lewdness. To which I Answer.

First, That *Cicero* in this place speaks only against the corruptions of the Stage, which corruptions we do not pretend to defend.

Secondly, That *Cicero* in his fourth Book of the *Tusculan Questions*, speaks only against Comedy, which is but one sort of Dramatick Poetry, whereas in the very same place he implicitly commends Tragedy.

Thirdly, That even in condemning of Comedy he is inconsistent with himself: And that if the opinion of *Cicero* is of any validity, it is as valuable *pro* as *con*. *Cicero* in his Treatise *De Amicitia* and *De Senectute*, implicitly commends Comedy. For *Lelius*, whom *Cicero* by the mouth of *Familius*, extols above all the celebrated Seven whom Greece renown'd for Wisdom; *Lelius*, who had the universal reputation of the greatest Statesman, of the best man,  
and

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and the truest friend of his time, : this *Lelius* in the Treatise which bears his name, is not only found to cite a verse with approbation from *Terence*, but to mention his acquaintance and intimacy with that Comick Poet. Now I leave it to any one to judge, whether *Cicero* had not been very absurd, if he had introduc'd a person whom he so much extols as *Lelius*, a person of that Gravity, and that Capacity, and one who had so considerable a share in the Government of the *Roman* State : had not *Cicero*, I say, been very absurd, if he had introduc'd a person whom he so much extols as *Lelius*, openly acknowledging a familiarity with a profest corrupter of the people? But further, *Cato* in that Treatise of *Cicero* which bears his name, that *Cato* whom *Cicero* by the mouth of this very *Lelius*, prefers for wisdom to *Socrates* himself, the awful, the grave, the severe *Cato*, and the austere of the *Roman* Censors; this very *Cato* is introduced in the fore-mention'd Treatise, making honourable mention of *Plantus* and *Livius Andronicus*.

*Livy* and *Valerius Maximus* follow.

*Livy*, he says, reports the original of Plays. He tells us, they were brought in upon the score of Religion, to pacifie the Gods, and remove a Mortality. But then he adds, that the motives are good, when the means are stark naught: That the Remedy is worse than the Disease, and the Atonement more infectious than the Plague. In answer to which, I desire leave to observe:

First, that *Livy* in this place of the original of Plays, speaks neither of Tragedy nor of Comedy, nor of the *Satyræ*; which were the third species of the Roman Dramatick Poetry; but only of the rudeness of the *Ludi Fescennini*.

Secondly, That *Livy* commends the innocence of Plays, in the purity of their first institution.

Thirdly, That he attributes by manifest inference the guilt and corruptions of the Roman Stage, to things which can have no relation to our English Theatres. Which is apparent from his own words. *Inter aliarum parva principia verum, ludorum quoque prima origo ponenda est, ut appareret quam ab*  
sano



*sano initio res in hanc vix opulentis  
Regnis tolerabilem insaniam venerit.* Among the small beginnings of other things, we are obliged to give some account of the original of Theatrical representations, that it may appear how a thing that was innovent in its institution, grew up to so much licentious fury, as to render them intolerable even to the most flourishing States. From whence it is evident, that *Livy* in this place condemns the corruption neither of Comedy nor Tragedy, but either the licentiousness of *Liberius* his Farces, or the barbarity of the fights of the Gladiators, or the lewdness of the Pantomimes motions, or all of them put together. For it is manifest to any one, who has the least tincture of the Roman Learning, that of the Comedies and Tragedies which were extant in *Livy's* time, those were the purest, which had been writ latest.

Fourthly, I desire leave to observe here, that the latter half of what Mr *Collier* has father'd upon *Livy*, viz. that the motives were sometimes good, when the means were stark naught. That the Remedy in this case was worse than the

*the Disease ; and the Atonement more infectious than the Plague ;* has no manner of foundation in that Historian. From all which the Reader may discover the uncommon Sincerity and Integrity of this Censurer of the Stage. Indeed, without giving my self all this trouble for the clearing of the business, I might have left it to any one to judge, whether one of *Livy's* extraordinary sense, who courted Reputation and the favour of the publick, could have so little prudence, or so little good manners, as to use those expressions which Mr *Collier* puts in his mouth of the Drama itself, at the time that it was cherish'd by the people, supported by the Magistrates, and esteem'd a considerable part of their Religious worship.

Now it is impossible that any thing could shew less judgment than the following citation from *Tacitus*, who blames *Nero*, says Mr *Collier*, for hiring decay'd Gentlemen for the Stage ; for what does Mr *Collier* conclude from hence ? That *Tacitus* condemn'd the diversions of the Stage ? All that can be reasonably concluded from it is this, that *Tacitus* was of opinion that  
*Nero*

*Nero* debas'd the dignity of the *Roman* Nobility, by enrolling some of their Rank among an order of men, which among the *Romans* was reputed infamous. *Tacitus* was too much a Statesman to say any thing against the Stage, especially in the condition in which we are at present. He approves the conduct of *Augustus* in the first of his Annals, who after he had got possession of the Government, honour'd the *Roman* Theatre with his presence, not only out of his own inclination and complaisance to *Mecenas* ; but because he believ'd that reason of State requir'd, that he should sometimes partake of the pleasures of the people. *Tiberius*, says *Tacitus*, was quite of another humour. However, he had too much policy, and too much good sense, to use his new Subjects severely at first, after they had for so long together liv'd a gentle, voluptuous life. Thus far goes *Tacitus* in the first of his Annals, and Monsieur *Amelot* has made this Remark upon the place : A Prince in the beginning of his Reign ought not to alter any of the establish'd Customs, because the people are very unwilling to part with them.

To

To what *Tacitus* says of the *German* Women, that they ow'd their Chastity to their ignorance of these diversions, this may be answer'd, That first, supposing *Tacitus* in the right, that can have no reflection on our modern Theatres. For the *Roman* Ladies may very well have been corrupted by the intolerable lewdness of the Pantomimes, which lewdness has no relation to us. Secondly, It has been observ'd of *Tacitus*, that he is for referring all things to Politicks, even things that ought to be referr'd to Nature, and is for that reason sometimes out; as it is manifest from experience he is in this case. For the *Germans* are now as much us'd to Plays as the *Spaniards* or the *Italians*. And yet their women are much chaster than the women of those two Nations. From whence it is evident, that the *German* women owe their Chastity to the rudeness of their manners, and to their want of attraction, and to the coldness of their constitution.

In the hurry of my dispatch, I had almost forgot to return to *Valerius Maximus*, Who, says Mr Collier, being contemporary with *Livy*, gives much the



same account of the rise of Theatres at Rome. 'Twas Devotion which built them. And as for the performances of those places which Mr Dryden calls the ornaments, this Author censures as the blemishes of Peace. And which is more, he affirms, that they were the occasions of civil distractions, and that the State first blush'd, and then bled for the entertainment. He concludes, the consequences of Plays intolerable, and that the Massilienses did well in clearing the Country of them. Now here in one citation, Mr Collier has made no less than four or five mistakes, whether through malice or ignorance, I must leave the Reader to judge. For in the first place, *Valerius Maximus* censures neither Comedies nor Tragedies as the blemishes of Peace, and if Mr Collier by Theatre does not mean them, he means nothing that concerns us. In the next place he does not affirm, that either they or any of the publick Spectacles were the occasions of civil distractions. In the third place, He does not affirm that the State either blush'd or bled for the representation of Plays. In the fourth place, The refusal of the  
*Massilienses*

*Massilienses* to admit of Dramaticall representations can never argue any thing, not only because the consent of Nations is against that little State, but because we cannot conclude from their refusal, that they did not approve of them.

That all this may appear, I am oblig'd to transcribe what he says. *Proximus militaribus institutis ad urbana castra, id est Theatra gradus faciendus est, quoniam hac quoque sepe numero animosus acies instruxerunt, excogitataque cultus Deorum & hominum delectationis causa, non sine aliquo pacis rubore voluptatem & religionem civili sanguine senicorum portentorum gratia, macularunt.* From military institutions let us proceed to our City Camps, that is to Theatres, For these too have often shewn mighty Armies drawn up, and being first design'd for the worship of the Gods, and for the delights of men, defil'd our Pleasure and our Religion with the blood of the people.

Where we may take notice of three things. 1. That *Valerius Maximus* implicitly commends the original institution of Theatres. 2. That he charges that which was blameable in them upon the combats of the Gladiators. Thirdly, The representation of Plays was so far from

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from causing civil distractions, that upon the first representation of the *Ludi Pœscennini*, 390 years after the building of the City, the Patr'cians and Plebeians were quiet for above eight years, which was more than they had been for above a hundred years before. And after the first representation of Comedies and Tragedies, which was in the five hundred and fourteenth year of the City, there was never any civil dissention, or at least never but once, till the sedition of *Tiberius Gracchus*, which was above an hundred years after. Mr Collier translates *civili sanguine maculantur*, caus'd civil distractions, as if Plays were the principal cause of the dissentions between the Commons and the Patricians; whereas those dissentions were natural to the constitution of the Roman State, meer necessary consequences of enlarging their Empire, and by that means encreasing the number and force of the Commons, as *Machiavel* has declared in the sixth Chapter of the first Book of his discourses.

As for the *Massilians*, they will be better included under the Authorities which Mr Collier has brought in

in the second place from States.

In examining the Authorities which Mr Collier has brought from States, it will be convenient to say a word to the proceeding of the *Massilians*, as it is cited from *Valerius Maximus*; who commends them for refusing to admit of Plays among them. But first, the refusal of this petty state can be of very small significancy against the consent of nations. Secondly, This refusal is no sign of their disesteem of the Drama, but only of the prudence of their conduct. For expence, and any thing which looks like magnificence, are destructive to little States, which can never subsist without extream frugality

But the Athenians, says Mr Collier, for which he cites *Plutarch*, thought Comedy so unrespectable a performance, that they made a Law that no Judge of the *Areopagus* should make one. To which we reply, that this citation of *Plutarch* is absolutely false; and that if it were true, it could not be so much as pretended that it concluded against any thing but Comedy, which is but one species of Dramatick Poetry; and



that in reality it would be of no force against that.

What *Plutarch* says, is not that the *Athenians* made a Law, that none of the *Areopagi* should make a Comedy; for one might as well suppose that it should be enacted by an *English* Parliament, that none of the twelve Judges should write a Farce. That which *Plutarch* says is this, that the Council of *Areopagus* establish'd a Law, that no man whatever should make any Comedies. From whence it is manifest, that this law was made in the time of the old Comedy, and long before that came to any perfection, for Comedy, as is apparent from *Aristotle's* treatise of Poetry, was very much discourag'd at first: Indeed at first they were so intolerably scandalous, that they were thought to be prejudicial to the State. And it was a long time before the Magistrates could be prevail'd upon to be at the expence of the Chorus. But after the Magistrates were at the expence of the Chorus, 'tis absurd to imagine that a Law should be preferr'd against the writing that sort of Poem which was represented at the publick expence.

So

So that a Citation which Mr *Collier* has brought against the Stage in general, is of no force we see against Tragedy, nor against the new Comedy, no, nor so much as against the old one, as it stood in the time of *Eupolis* and *Aristophanes*. Mr *Collier* brings the words of his Authors, but leaves us to look for their Sense, and yet he would take it very ill to have that return'd upon him, which he has said of Mr *Durfey*, that he is at least in his Citations, *vox & præterea nihil*.

But he proceeds to the *Lacedæmonians*, and says, that they who were remarkable for the wisdom of their Laws, the sobriety of their manners, and their breeding of brave men, would not endure the Stage in any form, nor under any regulation. This citation too is from *Plutarch*, and just of as much validity against the Stage as the other. For what can Mr *Collier* conclude from hence, That the *Spartans* disapproved of the Drama? Why then did they frequent the Theatre while they sojourn'd at *Athens*? As it is plain that they did, both from the *Cato Major* of *Cicero*, and from *Valerius Maximus*,

Chap. 5. Lib. 4. All that can be concluded, from what *Plutarch* says of the *Lacedaemonians* is, that the Drama was not so agreeable to the nature of the *Spartan* Government, it being incompatible with rigid poverty, and with fewness of Subjects, which as *Machiavel* observes, in the Sixth Chapter of the first Book of his Discourses, were the two fundamentals of their constitution. But then Mr *Collier* may be pleas'd to observe, that no sort of Poetry flourish'd in that Government, nor History, nor Eloquence, nor written Philosophy. For as we observed above, the Arts never flourish'd in any Country where the Drama was decay'd or discouraged, and in those places where they have flourish'd, as they have risen they have sunk with the Stage.

But tho the Drama was inconsistent with the nature of the *Spartan* Government, it is so remarkably agreeable to ours, that the Stage with us was never attempted till the late Civil Wars, and then too by those who had first broke in upon our constitution, and as it rose again with the Hierarchy and with the Monarchy, we have seen it now attempted

tempted a second time, by those, who by their writings and by their examples, have strenuously endeavour'd to ruin both Church and State.

The next Authority is brought from the *Romans*. Tully informs us, says Mr Collier, that their predecessors counted all Stage-Plays uncreditable and scandalous. Insomuch that any Roman who turn'd Actor was not only to be degraded, but likewise as it were disincorporated, and unnaturaliz'd, by the order of the Censors.

This, Mr Collier tells us, that St. Austin cites from Tully in the fourth Book *De Repub.*; to which I could easily answer, that the same St Austin, as he is cited by Mr Collier in the 274th page of his Book, having apparently done Tully wrong in his citation of one of his Orations which is extant; the passage which he cites from the fourth Book *De Republica*, which is not come down to us, may be very justly suspected. This, I say, I could easily answer; and to convince the Reader that I have very good grounds for it, I think myself oblig'd to make it appear, that St Austin, as Mr Collier has cited him in the 274th page of his Book has done

Cicero,



## The Usefulness

Cicero a great deal of wrong. The passage is this. *Their own Tully's commendation of the Actor Roscius is remarkable. He was so much a Master, says he, that none but himself was worthy to tread the Stage; and on the other hand, so good a man, that he was the most unfit person of the gang to come there. Now what will the Reader say, when I make it appear that Tully never said any such thing? In order to which, I am oblig'd to transcribe the passage. Roscius Socium fraudavit? Potest hoc homini huic herere peccatum? Qui medius Fidius (audacter dico) plus Fidei quam artis: plus veritatis quam discipline possidet in se: quem Populus Romanus meliorem virum quam Histrionem esse arbitratur, qui ita dignissimus est scena propter artificium ut dignissimus sit curia propter abstinentiam. Has Roscius defrauded his friend? Can he possibly be guilty of this? Who, by Heavens, (I boldly speak it) has more sincerity, than he has Art, more integrity than he has discipline, who, by the judgment of the Roman people, is a better Man than he is a Player, the worthiest of all men to tread the Stage, by reason of his excellent action, and*

the worthiest to partake of the Magistracy by reason of his singular moderation.

Now I appeal to the Reader, if this has so much as the least affinity with Mr Collier's meaning? I have all this while done my utmost to keep my Temper. But I cannot forbear informing Mr Collier, that Nature did not make the ferment and rising of the Blood for Atheism, as he fondly imagines in the 80th page of his Book. For an Atheist is a wretched unthinking Creature, who deserves compassion. No, Nature made the Ferment of the blood to rise against those, who are base enough to defame the dead by suborning them to witness what they never knew nor thought.

From all which it plainly appears, that I may deny very justly to answer to what is cited here from *Cicero*, since part of it carries in itself such a Manifestation of falsehood; for how could Plays be accounted scandalous by the predecessors of *Cicero*, when before the end of the first *Punick* War, which was about two hundred years before *Cicero's* time, the *Romans* knew nothing

of the true Drama ; for the Plays which were represented in the 391<sup>st</sup> year of the City, were the *Ludi Fescennini*. Now it was not quite a hundred years after the appearance of *Liuius Andronicus*, who writ the first Plays, that *Scipio* and *Lelius*, the two greatest men of the State, whether you consider their virtue, their courage, or their capacity, encourag'd and assisted *Terence* in the writing of his Comedies, and were his friends by publick profession, which they would certainly never have been, if at that time the *Romans* had lookt upon Plays as scandalous. 'Tis indeed very true, that the profession of Actor was not very creditable at *Rome*, but it does not follow from thence, that Plays were at all scandalous. Your common Fiddlers are scandalous here, though Musick is very honourable. The ancient *Romans* could not esteem any thing that was Religious scandalous. Their Plays were a part of their Religious worship, represented at the publick expence, and by the care of the *Ædiles Curules*, the Magistrate; who had the care of the publick worship.

I must confess I have a hundred times wondered, why Players that were so much esteem'd at *Athens*, should have so little credit at *Rome*, when the Plays had so much, when not only both Tragedies and Comedies were a part of their Religious worship, represented at the expence of the publick, and by the care of the publick Magistrates, but when the very persons who writ'em were carest by their greatest Statesmen, nay, and when some of the Poems were written by their greatest Statesmen themselves.

But *Livy*, whom Mr *Collier* cites once again, shall immediately clear my doubt, for the young *Romans*, says he, according to Mr *Collier's* citation, kept the *Fabule Atellanae* to themselves. They would not suffer this diversion to be blemish'd by the Stage. For this reason, says Mr *Collier*, as the Historian observes, the Actors of the *Fabule Atellanae*, were neither expell'd their Tribe, nor refus'd to serve in Arms. Both which penalties it appears the common Players lay under.

Here



## The Usefulness

Here Mr. Collier seems to me, to have made a very gross mistake. For he has interpreted *ab Histrionibus Pollui* to be blemish'd by the Stage, according to the noble Latitude which he gives himself in translating. Whereas it is very plain from Horace's Art of Poetry, that the *Fabula Atellane* were acted on the publick Theatre immediately after the Tragedies.

*Verum ita Risores, ita Commendare  
Conveniet Satyros, ita vertere seria  
ludo;  
Ne quicunq; Deus, quicunque adhibe-  
bitur Heros  
Regali conspectus in Auro super  
ostro,  
Migret in obscuras humili Sermone Ta-  
bernas.*

Dacier is of opinion too in his Comment on the 227th verse of Horace's Art of Poetry, that the *Fabula Atellane* were not only acted on the publick Stage but acted by the same Players that the Tragedies were, in which he is apparently mistaken; for in the first place this opinion makes him

him inconsistent with himself; as any one may see, who consults what he says, upon the 231st verse, where he affirms, that the Actors of the *Fabula Atellanae*, had priviledges beyond what the common Players had. In the second place, the passage which he brings to prove his opinion, proves nothing at all. The Passage is,

*Regali conspectus in auro nuper & astro,*  
 &c. which Dacier takes to be spoken of the Players; whereas it is manifestly spoken of the *Persona Drammatica*, that is, of the God or the Hero.

From what I have said, we may observe three things.

First, That the *Fabulae Atellanae* were acted on the publick Theatre. Secondly, That they were not acted by the Tragedians nor the Comedians; tho they were writ by the Tragick and Comick Poets. Thirdly, That the Actors of the *Fabulae Atellanae* were not better treated than common Actors, because they did not Act on the publick Theatre. *Valerius Maximus* gives us the reason why they were better treated in the Fourth Chapter of his Second Book.

Book. *Atellani autem ab oscis acciti sunt: quod genus detestationis Italica severitate temperatum ideoque vacuum notum est, nam neque tribu movetur, neque a militaribus stipendiis repellitur.* From whence it is apparent, that it was from the severity of that sort of Poem, that the Actors of the *Fabule Atellane* were treated more kindly, than the common Actors.

But now how came the Actors of the *Fabule Atellane* to be treated with so much humanity, on the account of the severity of those Poems, when the Tragedians incurr'd the Censorian note? For Tragedy has infinitely more severity than the *Fabule Atellane* could ever have. For the *Fabule Atellane* were partly satyrical, and had as great a mixture of Railery as have our Tragicomedies; whereas Tragedy as all the world knows is grave and severe throughout. That which follows seems to me to be the reason of this, and to be the true cause why at Rome the common Actors were so hardly us'd, when Plays were so much esteem'd by the Romans.

Book The

The first Plays that were represented by the Romans were the *Ludi Fescennini*, which were licentious and scurrilous even at first, and full of particular scandalous reflections, but in a little time they grew bloody and barbarous; and that cruelty of Defamation to which they arriv'd, was in all probability the cause why those who acted in them were so severely treated by the State. And what inclines me to this opinion the more, is the following passage of *Horace*.

*Fescennina per hunc inventa Licentia*  
morem,

*Versibus alternis approbri rustica fudit,*  
*Libertasque recurrentes accepta per an-*  
nos

*Lusit Amabiliter : donec jam servus*  
apertam

*In Rabiem verti cepit Focus; & per*  
honestas

*Ire domos impune minax : Doluere*  
cruento

*Dente laceffiti : fuit intactis quoq; cura*  
*Conditione super communi : Quis etiam*  
Lex

*Penaq; lata.*

H

Not



Not long after these appear'd the *Fabula Atellana*; and because their Satyr was free from particular reflection, and their raillery innocent, and because there was something which was severe and noble in them; this might prevail upon the following censors to exempt the Actors of the *Fabula Atellana* from the censorian note; and might occasion a Law to be made, that these Actors should be capable of bearing Arms.

It was a considerable time after this before Tragedies and Comedies were substituted in the room of the *Ludi Fescennini*. Comedy at first was cultivated most, as *Dacier* somewhere observes, and it was late before Tragedy arriv'd to its height, tho at the last it fell infinitely short of the divine sublimity of the *Sophoclean* Tragedy. Now tho the *Romans* were charm'd with Tragedy when it was come to its height, and consequently with those who writ it, and tho they found it to be without comparison more grave, more noble, and more instructive than the *Fabula Atellana* were, yet they might probably think it below the majesty of the *Roman* people to abolish an ancient custom,  
and

and an establish'd Law of the State, in favour of the common Players. Yet this can be of no prejudice to our modern Players; because all States have had unreasonable customs, and this of the *Romans* may be concluded to be such; being directly opposite to that of the *Grecians*, and the *Athenians* particularly, from whom the *Romans* had their Laws, of the twelve Tables, which were the most venerable of all their Laws. What I have already said answers the *Theodosian* Code, and so I come to that which he calls our own constitution, from that which breaks our constitution.

Neither of the two Statutes, which he mentions page 242, can reach the King and the Queens Servants, they being by no means in the rank of common Players. The Theatre flourish'd under the Princes in whose Reigns those Statutes were made, especially in the Reign of the latter, which may serve for a proof that the severity of that Statute extended only to Strowlers.

All that can be concluded from the Petition to Queen *Elizabeth*, which is mentioned in the same page, is that

the Queen thought fit to suppress the Play-houses that were set up in the City, tho she allow'd them in other places. And this was not without a great deal of Reason: For since the Interest of *England* is supported by Trade, and the chief Trade of *England* is carry'd on by the Citizens of *London*, it was not convenient that the young Citizens should have a temptation so near them, that might be an avocation to them from their affairs. And since it is apparent from Mr *Collier's* citation, that the Queen, upon the City's Remonstrance, suppress the Play-houses which were set up in the City, but suffer'd them in other places; this very citation is a manifest proof of that Queens approbation of Theatres and Dramatick Poems.

That Reader who can expect that I should make any serious answer to the following citations from the Bishop of *Aras's* decree and the *Dutch Gazette*, deserves to be laugh'd at rather than satisfy'd. And I cannot imagine why these Gazettes should be cited in the same row with so many Philosophers, Councils  
and

and Fathers, unless Mr *Collier* would  
sily insinuate that they are of equal  
Authority. But 'tis high time to pro-  
ceed to the objections which may be  
brought from Reason and Religion.

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H 3

CHAP



## C H A P. IV.

*The Objections from Reason  
and Religion Answer'd.*

**I** Now come to answer what may be objected from Reason and from Religion.

The objections against the Stage, from Reason are chiefly four. 1. That it encourages Pride. 2. That it encourages Revenge. 3. That it exposes Quality; and by doing so, brings a considerable part of the Government into Contempt.

4. That it exposes the Clergy, and by endangering Religion endangers Government. The two first are general, and the two last particular objections. I shall speak to them all succinctly.

First, The Stage encourages Pride; a quality that indisposes men for obedience,

dience, and for the living peaceably. To which I answer, that if Ambition is meant by Pride, the Stage is so far from encouraging that, that it is the business of Tragedy to deter men from it, by shewing the great ones of the Earth humbled. On the other side, if Pride be made to signifie Vanity, and Affectation, the child of Vanity, 'tis the business of Comedy to expose those; which is sufficiently acknowledg'd by Mr *Collier* in the Introduction to his Book. But if by Pride is meant Pride well regulated, which Philosophers call Greatness of mind, and which men of the world call Honour, then I must confess that the Stage above all things encourages that, and by encouraging it provides for the happiness of particular men, and for the publick prosperity.

I must confess, if all men were perfect Christians, there would be no occasion for this Philosophical Virtue. But since that neither is, nor, if we credit the Scriptures, will be, and since this very Pride is the Virtue of those who are not Virtuous, and the Religion of those who are not Religious, I

appeal to any sensible Reader, if it is not to this that he owes in some measure his life, his fortune, and all his happiness. For it is this, which in a great measure makes his Servant just to him, his Friend faithful, and his Wife chaste.

'Tis this too from whence for the most part comes the security and ornament of States. The love of Glory goads on the conquering Souldier to his duty, excites the Philosopher, animates the Historian, and inflames the Poet. So that, in short, from this very quality, the encouraging which Mr Collier's undistinguishing Pen condemns, proceed almost all the advantages that make private men happy, and States prosperous.

But Secondly, The Stage encourages Revenge, which is so destructive to the happiness of particular men, and to the publick Peace. To which I answer, First, that the Stage keeps a man from revenging little injuries, by raising his mind above them. Secondly, That if it does sometimes show its Characters revenging intolerable injuries, and consequently punishing enormous crimes, yet

yet by doing that it deters men from committing such crimes, and consequently from giving the occasions of such Revenge: So that we may set the one against the other. Thirdly, That perhaps it equally concerns the peace of mankind, that men should decline the revenging little injuries which happen every day, and should sometimes revenge intolerable ones, which very seldom happen. *Cicero* affirms in his Oration for *Milo*, that *Milo* had done a service to the Commonwealth by removing of *Clodius*. From whence it appears, that that great Statesman thought that sometimes private Revenges might be necessary for the public Safety. *Servilius Ahala* did service to the State by removing of *Spurius Melius*; and *Scipio Nasica* sav'd it from utter ruin by the Death of *Tiberius Gracchus*. Fourthly, That sort of Tragedy, in which the Characters are the best form'd, and the incidents the best contriv'd to move Compassion and Terror, has either no Revenge, or by no means that sort of Revenge which can encourage the Crime in others. If *Mr Collier* had known any thing of a Play,



appeal to any sensible Reader, if it is not to this that he owes in some measure his life, his fortune, and all his happiness. For it is this, which in a great measure makes his Servant just to him, his Friend faithful, and his Wife chaste.

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Play, he would have been sensible of this. If any Reader wants to be convinc'd of it, I refer him to what I have cited from *Aristotle's Poetick* in the last Chapter of the Remarks on *Prince Arthur*. But,

Thirdly, The Stage exposes the Nobility, and so brings a part of the Government into contempt. This objection seems to Mr *Collier*, peculiar to the *English* Stage. For as for *Moliere*, says he, he pretends to fly his Satyr no higher than a Marquis. Good God! As if a Marquis were not above any condition of men that have been expos'd on the *English* Stage. This trick that our Poets have got of exposing quality, is a liberty, says Mr *Collier*, unpractis'd by the *Latin* Comedians: where, by Comedians, I suppose, he means Comick Poets. But it was very common with the *Greeks*, *Aristophanes*, *Cratinus*, *Eupolis*, and all Writers of the old Comedy, not only expos'd the chief of the *Athenian* Nobility, but mention'd their very names, and produc'd their very persons by the resemblance of the Vizors. In imitation of these, *Lucilius* the Inventor of Satyr, as *Horace* tells

tells us, spar'd none of the *Roman* Nobility, if they deserv'd the lash, no, not even persons of Consular dignity. And yet as *Boileau* observes in his discourse upon *Satyr*, *Scipio*, and *Lelius*, did not think this man unworthy of their friendship, because he had expos'd some of the scandals to quality, and did not imagin that they in the least endanger'd their own Reputation, by abandoning all the Coxcombs of the Commonwealth to him. From whence 'tis apparent, that if the *Roman* Comick Poets did not bring the Nobility of *Rome* upon the Stage, it was for want of opportunity and not of good will. For how should they bring the *Roman* quality upon the Stage, when it is plain that they never laid their Scene in *Rome*, nor so much as in *Italy*. The *Latin* Comick Poets translated the *Greeks*; now the old and the middle Comedy they could not translate, because the old Comedy describing particular persons, and the middle one particular adventures, those Comedies must have lost most of their graces upon the Theatre of another State. The *Latins* then translated the new Comedy, in  
which



which indeed the *Athenian* Nobility was never expos'd, because it was impracticable in that way of writing. For the *Athenians* had no Titles among them ; because those people who were truly great knew that real greatness consisted in merit and virtue ; but when that real greatness forsook the world, a titular greatness, the shadow of the other, was introduced to supply it ; a meer invention to cajole people, and perswade them that they might be noble without Virtue. Now the *Athenians* having no Titles, I cannot conceive how the *Athenian* Nobility could be possibly expos'd by *Menander*, or any of the Writers of the new Comedy. For, to set the mark of Quality on any one of their Characters, there was either a necessity of mentioning his name, or describing his person, or his particular employment in the State ; the doing which would have thrown them back upon the old or middle Comedy, which were both forbid by the Law. From all which it appears, that the *Romans* in this case are not against us, and the *French* are clearly on our sides. But to come to the reason of the thing, if a  
Lord

Lord may not be shewn a Fool upon the Stage, I would fain ask Mr *Collier* what Fools a Comick Poet may lawfully show there, and at what condition of men he is oblig'd to stop. I would fain know whether a Poet may be allow'd to Dub his Dramatical Coxcombs? May he show a Fool a Knight Baronet, or a Knight Batchelour, or are they too included in Quality? Must he be oblig'd to go no further than Squire, and must Fool and Squire continue to be terms synonymous? If any of Mr *Collier's* acquaintance will give himself the diversion of asking him these questions, I dare engage that he will find him embarrass'd sufficiently.

But methinks neither the Lords nor we are oblig'd to Mr *Collier* for his extraordinary civility. For if a Lord is capable of committing extravagancies as well as another man, why should Mr *Collier* endeavour to perswade him that he is above it? or why should he hinder him from being reclaim'd? unless he would imply that a Commoner may be corrected when he grows extravagant, but that when a Lord grows fantastick he is altogether incorrigible. Nor are we

we oblig'd to Mr *Collier* any more than the Peers are? For since the bare advantage of their conditions makes some of them already grow almost insupportable, why should any one endeavour to add to their vanity, by exempting them from common censure?

Besides, since follies ought to be expos'd, the follies of the great are the fittest, as being most conspicuous and most contagious. The follies of the meaner sort are often the effects of ignorance, and merit compassion rather than contempt. Affected follies are the most despicable; now Affectation is the child of Vanity, and Vanity of Condition.

But why should a Lord be free from Dramatical censure, when he can be corrected no where but upon the Stage? A Commoner may be corrected in company, but such friendly admonition to a Lord may be interpreted Scandal.

For our Comick Poets, I dare engage that no men respect our Nobility more than they do: They know very well that their titles illustrate their merit, and adorn their virtue; but that those whom they expose, are such  
whose

whose Follies and whose Vices render their Titles ridiculous. And yet that they expose them no more than the rest of the Kings Subjects: For Folly as well as Vice is personal, and the Satyr of Comedy falls not upon the order of men, out of which the Ridiculous Characters are taken, but upon the persons of all orders who are affected with the like follies.

For they know further what Mr Collier apparently never knew, that a Lord in effect in a Comedy signifies any man: For the Characters of Comedy are always at bottom universal and allegorical: And the making Lords of their Comick Pools, can signifie no more than to admonish our men of Quality that they are concern'd in the instruction as well as others.

The fourth objection from Reason is, That the Stage exposes the Clergy, and so by endangering Religion endangers Government. But of this I shall speak in the following part of this Book, where I design to treat of Religion.

We now come to answer what is objected from Religion, which is, That there is no need of the Stage to make people



## *The Usefulness*

people good Subjects; for that the Pulpit teaches men their duty to their Prince, better than all the Philosophy and all the Poetry in the world. 'Tis indeed undeniable. But the validity of this objection depends upon two suppositions; which are, that all the Subjects of the State go to Church, and that all attend when they are there. Whereas it is manifest that our Atheists and Deists seldom go thither; and that our doubting, cold, and lukewarm Christians seldom attend when they are there. But that the Stage, reduc'd to its primitive purity, would be a means to send them thither, and the best of all human preparatives for the Divine instruction which they would find there, is designed to be shown in the remaining part of this Treatise.

*The end of the second part.*

THE

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THE  
USEFULNESS  
OF THE  
STAGE.

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PART III.

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CHAP. I.

*That the Stage is useful to  
the Advancement of Reli-  
gion.*

**I** Now come to shew that the Stage  
is useful to the advancement of Re-  
ligion.

ligion. And, First, Of the Christian Religion in general. Secondly, Of the Christian Religion particularly, and more especially of the Reform'd Religion.

Religion in general, or natural Religion, may be consider'd as consisting of two parts; the things to be believed, and the things to be done.

First, The things to be believed, are  
 1. The being of a God. 2. Providence.  
 3. Immortality of the Soul. 4. Future Rewards and Punishments. The Poet, and particularly the Tragick Poet, asserts all these, and these are the very foundations of his Art; for in the first place the Machines are the very life and soul of Poetry; now the Machines would be absurd and ridiculous without the belief of a God, and a particular Providence. In the second place, let any man shew me where Terror is mov'd to a heighth, and I will shew him that that place requires the belief of a God and particular Providence. In the third place, Poetick Justice would be a jest if it were not an Image of the Divine, and if it did not consequently suppose the being of a God and Providence.

dence! It supposes too the immortality of the Soul, and future rewards and punishments. For the things which in perfect Tragedy bring men into fatal calamities are involuntary faults; that is, faults occasion'd by great passions. Now this upon a supposition of a future state, is very just and reasonable. For since passions in their excesses, are the causes of most of the disturbances that happen in the world, upon a supposition of a future state, nothing can be more just, than that the power which governs the world, should make sometimes very severe examples of those who indulge their passions; providence seems to require this. But then to make involuntary faults capital, and to punish them with the last punishment, would not be so consistent with the goodness of God, unless there were a compensation hereafter. For such a punishment would not only be too rigorous, but cruel and extravagant.

The second part of natural Religion contains the things which are to be done; which include,



## The Usefulness

1. Our duty to God.
2. Our duty to our Neighbour.
3. Our duty to our selves.

And all these it is the business of Tragedy to teach; witness the practice of the Ancient Chorus, as it is comprehended in the following verses of *Horace*.

Ille bonis favet; & concilietur Amicis  
Et regat irato, & amet peccare timentes:  
Ille Dapes laudet mensa brevis ille  
salubrem  
Justitiam, legesq; & apertis otia portis:  
Ille tegat commissa Deosq; precetur &  
oret  
Ut redeat miseris, abeat fortuna su-  
perbis.

From which it appears, that it was the business of Tragedy to exhort men to Piety and the worship of the Gods; to perswade them to Justice, to Humility, and to Fidelity, and to incline them to moderation and temperance. And 'tis for the omission of one of these duties that the persons of the modern Tragedy are shewn unfortunate in their Catastrophes.

Thus *Don John* is destroy'd for his libertinism and his impiety ; *Timon* for his profusion and his intemperance ; *Macbeth* for his lawless ambition and cruelty ; *Castalio* for his falshood to his Brother and Friend ; *Jaffeir* for his clandestine Marriage with the Daughter of his Benefactor ; and *Belvidera* for her disobedience.

Thus we have shewn, by reason and by matter of fact, that it is the business of the Stage to advance Religion, and it is plain from History and from Experience, that Religion ha flourish'd with the Stage ; and that the *Athenians* and *Romans* who most encourag'd it, were the most religious people in the world. And, perhaps, if we would come down to our selves, it would be no difficult matter to shew, that they who frequent our Theatres, have a great deal more of natural Religion in them, than its declared inveterate Enemies, who are principally Fanaticks and Jesuits : for the Vices which are charg'd upon the friends of the Stage, are for the most part the effects of frailty, and meer human Vices ; whereas the faults of its inveterate Enemies, are known to be

diabolical crimes, destructive of Society, of Peace, and of human Happiness; such as falshood, flander, injustice, back-biting, perfidiousness, and irreconcilable hatred.

I now come to shew in the second place that the Stage is useful for the advancing the Christian, and particularly the Reformed Religion. The Christian Religion has two parts, the Moral and the Mysterious. The Moral consists of Human and Christian Virtues: The Human Virtues are a part of Natural Religion; which, since the Stage advances, as we have shewn above, it follows that it partly advances Christianity. The Stage too in some measure may be made to recommend Humility, Patience and Meekness to us, which are true Christian Virtues: And tho a Dramatick Poet neither can nor ought to teach the Mysteries of the Christian Religion, yet by recommending the Human and the Christian Virtues to the practice of our Audience, he admirably prepares men for the belief of the Mysteries. For this is undeniable, that it is not Reason, but Passion and Vice that keeps any man from being a Christian.

That

That therefore that moderates our Passions, and instructs us in our Duty, must consequently advance our Faith. So that the Stage is not only absolutely necessary for the instructing and humanizing those who are not Christians, but the best of all human things to prepare them for the sublimer Doctrines of the Church. Now that which inclines us to the Christian Religion will incline us to the purer sort of it, and that which has the least affinity with Idolatry, which is the Reform'd Religion. That which opens men's eyes as the Stage does, by purging our passions and instructing us in our duty; and that which raises their minds, will make them naturally averse from superstitious foppery, and from being slaves to Priestcraft, And that which exposes Hypocrisy, as the Stage does, must naturally make men averse from Fanaticism and the affected austerity of Bigots. And therefore the Jesuits on one hand, and the fanatics on the other, have always been inveterate Enemies to Plays. This is remarkable, that the Church and the Hierarchy, ever since the Reformation, have flourish'd with the Stage, were depos'd with it, and



restor'd with it. Thus have I shewn that the Stage advances Religion, and more particularly the Christian Reform'd Religion. I come now to answer what may be objected from Reason and from Authority.

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## C H A P. II.

### *The Objections from Reason Answer'd.*

**T**He objections from Reason are chiefly three. That the Stage makes its Characters sometimes talk prophane; that it encourages Pride; that it exposes Religion in the Priesthood. These are so easily answer'd, that I shall dispatch them in a few words, and come to the objections from Authority.

First, The Stage sometimes makes its Characters talk prophanely. To which I answer; That if the Character which speaks is well mark'd and the prophane-ness be necessary for the Fable and for the

the Action, then the prophaness is not unjustifiable : for to assert the contrary, would be to affirm, that it is unlawful for a Dramatick Poet to write against prophaneness, which is ridiculous. A Poet has no other way in the Drama of giving an Audience an aversion for any Vice, than by exposing or punishing it in the persons of the Drama. And here I think my self obliged to reply to something that Mr Collier has asserted, in his Remarks upon Mr Dryden's *King Arthur*, which is, that they who bring Devils on the Stage, can hardly believe them any where else. But why for God sake ? for a man of sense always reasons, but the Pedant asserts dogmatically. Did *Æschilus* in bringing the Furies upon the Stage of *Athens*, shew that he thought they were nothing but a poetical sham ? Why should it be more irreligion in us to bring Devils on the Stage, that it was to bring Furies in him ? Can any thing be more terrible, than the shewing of Devils, if they are shewn solemnly ? And can any thing that moves Terror, do a disservice to Religion ?

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But, Secondly, The Stage encourages Pride. Indeed, I must confess, that even the best sort of Pride, which some call honour, and others greatness of mind, is not so very consistent with some of the Christian virtues. But then I do not affirm that the Stage can be at all useful for the instruction of those who are arrived at any more perfect state of Religion; but for those who are not, that is, for the generality of Mankind, greatness of mind may be very serviceable, for the assisting them to command their passions, and the restraining them from committing enormous crimes.

But, Thirdly, The Stage exposes Religion by exposing the Priesthood. To which I answer, That to talk of exposing Religion is Cant; for to expose Religion is to expose Truth, which is absurd; because nothing can be expos'd but that which is false. If the Stage really ridicul'd Religion, instead of ridiculing Hypocrisy, some people, whose Religion lies in their Muscles, would be more easily reconcil'd to it. For how many Books have been printed in *English* that have been levell'd directly against Religion itself? For what reason

reason then have none of those Zealots, who have declaim'd with so much fury against the Stage, writ any thing to dissuade people from reading those Deistical and Atheistical Treatises? For what reason have they omitted this, unless because those Books only attack Religion, about which they never much trouble their heads; but the Poets attack them. The bringing a vicious or a ridiculous Priest upon the Stage then cannot be interpreted the exposing Religion, but the ridiculing Hypocrisie. However, this is very certain, that no Poet ought to shew a Priest in such a manner as to shew any disesteem of the Character. But I cannot for my life conceive why the bringing a foolish or a vicious Priest upon the Stage should be such an abominable thing.

For, since persons of all degrees, from Monarch to Peasant, are daily brought upon the Stage, why should the Clergy be exempted? The Clergy have been treated by our Comick Poets with a great deal more respect than the Laity: Because they have hardly spar'd any condition of the Laity, but none of the superiour Clergy have been ever  
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expos'd in our Comedies ; which is one sign of the good intention of the Poets, and that they only show the Follies and Vices of some, while they reverence the Piety and Learning of others, and the order in general.

And whereas Mr *Collier* affirms, that foreign States suffer no Priests to be expos'd on the Comick Stage. To that we answer, That in Countries where the Church of *Rome* is establish'd they have some reason to use this niceness : For prudence requires that the Magistrate should always take care of the established Religion, and the established Religion in those Countries being almost all Priestcraft, to expose the Priests is there to expose Religion. Besides, in those places Priestcraft and Secular Policy have a nearer alliance, and a closer dependance on each other by much, than they have here : for the Priests are considerably assistant to the Magistrates in the enslaving the people, Besides, in *Italy* and *Spain* the Inquisition rages, and Priests will be sure to take care of themselves. As for *France*, tho they never had a Priest upon the Stage, yet they have a Poem which was writ on  
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pose to ridicule even the superiour Clergy. And by whom was it writ ? By Monsieur *Boileau*, the most sober and most religious of all their Poets. Who advis'd it ? Who commanded it ? Monsieur *De Lamoignon*, illustrious for his profound Capacity, renown'd for his Learning, and fam'd for his Piety ; who believ'd that the exposing that litigious humour that was crept into the Regular Clergy, might do important service to the *Gallican* Church. And why should our Magistrates make any exception against the exposing the faults of the Clergy here, where the Religion is so pure, that to touch a Priest is by no means to hurt the Religion.

And whereas Mr *Collier* says, that to affront a Priest is to affront the Deity ; so it is to affront a Peasant who is a good Christian ; besides, affronts are always personal, but a Priest in a Play is a general Character ; and the bringing an ill or a ridiculous one upon the Stage, rather proceeds from our veneration for Religion, than from any contempt of it.

And whereas Mr *Collier* takes a great deal of pains to prove that a Priest ought

ought not to be contemn'd because he is a degree above a Gentleman ; that defence methinks is not altogether so pertinent. For it is evident, that persons of degrees superiour to Gentlemen are every day expos'd on the Stage. And besides, the way for a Clergyman to secure himself from contempt, is not to boast of secular advantages which in him is truly ridiculous, but to shew his Meekness and his Humility, which are true Christian virtues.

Besides, the Characters in every Comedy are always at the bottom universal and allegorical, or else the instruction could not be universal. A ridiculous or vicious Priest in a Comedy, signifies any man who has such follies or vices, and the Cassock is produc'd on purpose to signify to the Clergy, that they are partly concern'd in the instruction, and have sometimes their vices and follies as well as the Laity.

The exposing upon the Stage a Priest, who is an ill, or a ridiculous person, can never make the order contemptible, for nothing can make the Priesthood contemptible but Priests. He among them who writ the *Grounds of*  
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*the Contempt of the Clergy*, says nothing that I remember of the Stage; but he says a great deal of their own follies, and something too of their vices; now the exposing these follies and vices, would be a way to reclaim them, and so to preserve the esteem that they have in the world.

This is plain from experience: For the Inferiour Clergy is much more respected in *England*, than the Regular Clergy is either in *France* or *Italy*, where they are never expos'd on the Stage. And their lives are here less scandalous than they are abroad. They who have been at *Marseilles*, may inform Mr *Collier*, that it is there a very common thing to see Priests, both Secular and Regular, who are slaves in the Gallies for the most detestable crimes.

It appears to be full as necessary, to expose a Priest, who is an ill man, as one of the Laity, because his example is more contagious, and the salvation of so many Souls depend on it: whereas a Layman influences fewer. Besides, a Layman often offends thro want of consideration, because he does not reflect, his worldly avocations diverting  
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his thoughts from Religion ; so that such a one may have returns of Conscience. But an ill Clergyman cannot pretend inconsiderateness, for it is his daily business to reflect on his Duty ; and consequently such a one must be a downright Atheist ; and an Atheist sinning on this side the Law, has nothing to restrain him but the apprehension of infamy, and the fear of becoming contemptible.

Besides, a Layman who transgresses, has his Rector or his Curate to remind him of his duty. Shall a Clergyman who is an ill liver go on without admonition. Is that for his advantage, or the benefit of his flock , or the good of the publick.

We own indeed that it is our duty to be instructed by them, yet ought they sometimes to take their turn, and be subject to our remonstrances : As the *Roman* Consuls, if we may have leave to make such a comparison, were accountable to the Tribunes of the people, by the policy of that constitution. Thus I have answer'd what may be objected from Reason against the Stage in general, and what Mr *Collier* has objected

jected against the *English* Stage in particular, I mean as much as was fit to be answer'd. For there is no defending the Immodesty, or Immorality of, or unnecessary Prophaneness of some of our Plays. Let us now come to the objections which Mr *Collier* has brought from Authority.

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### CHAP. III.

#### *The Objections from Authority Answer'd.*

THE objections from Authority are of two sorts, Councils and Fathers. But now let me ask Mr *Collier* this question, Were these persons inspir'd or no? That is, did the Spirit of God dictate whatever they writ to 'em? If he says it did, I have nothing to say to such a man, but abandon him to Ecclesiastical censure. If he says it did not, why then I must tell him, that we

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live in an age in which there are persons that are too judicious, and too generous to forego their reasons for meer Human Authority. An age in which we account it not only an absurdity, but a sin to believe in any thing under Heaven; as well knowing that Reason is the top of all human things; and tho not so sacred as Revelation, is in some measure Divine. For Reason is given us by God for our guide, where we have no Revelation to contradict it. And both Human Authority and Revelation hold, and depend on Reason. We always assent to Revelations divine Authority, because Reason assures us, that we always ought to assent to it: And we sometimes refuse to acknowledge human Authority, because we are convinc'd by Reason that we ought not to submit to it.

For the Councils he has cited, I must tell him, that we are not oblig'd to acknowledge any of those Councils Infalible; but refuse to be determin'd by their decrees, unless they are confirm'd by Reason or Revelation.

Now I desire to know of Mr *Collier* whether he himself pays the last deference

rence to those Councils or no? If he answers, that he owns their Authority, how durst he appear to have read so many Plays as he has cited thro out this Book, when the Decrees of these Councils even in this very case appear from his own citations so much stronger against the Clergy than they do against the Laity? But if he answers, that he disowns their Authority, with what prodigious assurance can he offer to impose it on us, that while he takes his own satisfaction he may laugh at our credulity?

But to come to the Fathers, they had their reasons for crying out against the Stage, which cannot so much as be pretended to be reason, to us. They had chiefly five, and those five reasons will serve to answer whatever has been cited by Mr *Collier* in his long Ecclesiastical scrawl.

First, Plays in their time were a part of the Pagan worship; and that in the beginning of Christianity was alone a sufficient motive to oblige the Fathers to forbid those diversions to the new Christians, several of which may be very well suppos'd to be not yet confirm'd in the Faith.



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The Second reason why the Fathers forbad the first Christians Plays, was because the Combats of the Gladiators were mingled with those diversions, and something which was full as barbarous.

*Media inter Carmina poscunt*

*Aut ursum aut Pugiles.* Hor. ep. l. l. i.

The Third was the gesticulations of the Pantomimes, which indeed were unsufferably lewd, and unfit to be seen not only by Christians, but by any civil people.

Let any one but consult what Mr Collier has cited from the Fathers, and he will find that these were three of the main reasons which prevail'd upon the Fathers to forbid the Christians the diversions of the Theatre.

'Tis not lawful (says Theophilus, whom he cites first) for us to be present at the Prizes of your Gladiators, lest by this means we should be accessory to the Murders there committed. Neither dare we presume upon the Liberties of your other shows, lest our senses should be touched and disobligh'd with indecency and prophaneness.

And Tertullian, whom he cites next, says in his Apologetick, We keep off from your publick shows, because we can't understand

derstand the warrant of their original.

But there are two reasons behind ; the first of which was drawn from the purity of the primitive times. Which makes *Tertullian*, as Mr *Collier* has cited him, cry out, page 354. *But if you can't wait for delight, if you must be put into present possession, &c.* By which *Tertullian* seems to allow, that diversions indeed are necessary, but that Christians will find abundant entertainment in the very exercise of their Religion. This, I must confess, was very well directed by *Tertullian*. But if *Cato* was formerly laugh'd at, for speaking in the Senate as if he had liv'd in *Plato's* Republick, whereas he was really in the very dregs of that of *Romulus*, how shall this upstart Reformer escape contempt, who has apply'd to this profligate Age, what *Tertullian* directed to those fervent Christians, whose Souls were flaming with divine love in the purity of happier times.

Thus have I examin'd four of the five reasons, not one of which can be a reason to us. For, neither is our Drama a part of Idolatrous worship, nor have we either Gladiators or Pantomimes ; nor

the people of this age be satisfy'd to be always entertain'd with the Scripture, but require other diversions.

But the fifth reason is yet to come; by which it will appear, that these venerable Gentlemen are by no means qualified to judge of a cause, of which it appears even from Mr Collier's citations, that they have not the least knowledge.

For, says the Bishop of Antioch, whom he cites first. *The Tragical distractions of Tereus and Thyestes are nonsense to us.* Now could any man possibly talk thus, who had the least knowledge of the nature of Tragedy, and particularly of that Tragedy? It was below that Prelate to consider Horace, for he would have told him,

*Ira Thyesten exitio gravi  
Stravere, & ultis urbibus ultima  
Stetere cause, cur perirent  
Funditus, Imprimeritq; muris  
Hostile aratrum exercitus Insolens.  
Compesce mentem.*

Is the Moral which the Poet draws from this Fable nonsense to us? Is it impertinence in a Poet to tell us, that we ought to restrain our anger, because the indulging it has often brought  
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men into fatal calamities? For had this Prelate understood this affair, what could he have possibly dislik'd here? The Moral or the Fable? The Moral? That methinks should be hardly becoming of a professor of that Religion, which is therefore extoll'd above all others, because it is more Moral. Was it the Fable then which offended him, or the manner of conveying the Instruction? Methinks it is something odd in a Christian Prelate to condemn that method of Teaching which was chiefly practis'd by his great Master, whom he professes to imitate.

*But now to come to the Author De Spectaculis: What need I mention, says he, the Levities and Impertinence in Comedies, or the Ranting Distractions of Tragedy? Were these things unconcern'd with Idolatry, Christians ought not to be at them. For, were they not highly criminal, the foolery of them is egregious, and unbecoming the gravity of Believers.*

Now let me ask Mr Collier, whether it be lawful for Christians to read History? It would certainly be the absurdest thing in the world to deny it. Now



*Aristotle* has declar'd very formally that Tragedy is more grave and more instructive than History. And tho when the question is concerning Grace, I will believe the least of the Fathers before *Aristotle*, and all his Interpreters the Schoolmen together ; yet where the dispute is concerning the nature of Writing, and the colours of Speech, I will believe *Aristotle's* single testimony, before all the Fathers and Councils joyn'd in a body.

Tho Plays are forbidden by the Fathers and Councils, yet the Fathers own, and Mr *Collier* owns, that they are not forbidden by Scripture : Nor are they forbidden by Reason. For who are they who frequent them? Who are they that approve of them? Who are they that have not the least scruple about them? Not a parcel of fools that are carry'd away by meer imagination, and are only fit for *Bedlam* ; but the best and most reasonable part of the Nation, and particularly a thousand whom I could name that are considerable for their extraordinary qualities. Now I cannot for my life apprehend upon what account any thing

thing that is not forbidden by God ; that is neither prohibited by Reason nor Revelation, should be forbidden by men. We know what our Saviour has said in *St Matthew* of those who teach for Doctrines the Commandments of men, *c. 15. v. 9.* That it renders all their zeal ineffectual. But then, says *Tertulian*, as he is cited by *Mr Collier*, p. 245. *The Play-house is implicitly, tho not expressly forbid by the Scripture, in the first verse of the first Psalm : Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scorner.* But then say we, that nothing can be forbid by this, but what the Scripture or Reason have declar'd to be the counsel of the ungodly, and the way of sinners. Now, as we have manifestly shown above, neither Reason nor Revelation says that of the Theatre. And as for the seat of the scorner, that part of the Text can only be applicable to Comedy, and is full as applicable to the Press, and sometimes to the Pulpit itself.

In the next place, says the Author *De Spectaculis*, as he is cited by *Mr Collier*,

*lier, p. 262.* Some have thought the Play-house no unlawful diversion, because it was not condemn'd by express Scripture. *Let meer modesty*, says he, *supply the Holy Text*, and let Nature govern, where Revelation does not reach. Some things are too black to lye upon Paper, and are more strongly forbidden because unmentioned. The divine wisdom must have had a low opinion of Christians, if it had descended to particulars in this case. Silence is sometimes the best method of Authority. To forbid often puts people in mind of what they should not do. Thus, say *Tertullian*, says *Mr Collier*. But for my part, I both hope and believe that he wrongs him. For it is incredible to me, that a Father of the Church should reason, in so absurd a manner. For the chief reason why *Tertullian* affirms that the frequenting of Plays is not forbid by Scripture, is because the crime is too black to be particularly insisted on. As if *St Paul* in the first Chapter of the *Romans* had not descended to particular crimes of a blacker nature than this. Can we suppose that Scripture, which is a revelation of the will of God, and

a supplement to the law of Nature, should descend to condemn things which Reason had before condemn'd as abominable, and utterly against Nature? and shall it take no notice of things which are allow'd by Reason, and the Law of Nature (as we have shewn that the Theatre is) and which consequently cannot be discover'd to be sins but by the light of Revelations? Could *St Paul* in the 5th Chap. to the 1 Ep. to the *Corinthians* be so particular as to descend to a crime, which, when the Apostle writ the Epistle, concern'd but only one, who had married his Father's Wife, and which could never be suppos'd to concern very many, because the crime was against the custom and consent of Nations: Could the Apostle of the *Gentiles* I say descend to this, and think it too particular to mention a sin which concern'd the salvation of so many thousands who were then alive, and of so many millions who were to succeed them? Nay, could *St Paul*, in the 7th of the 1st Ep. to the *Cor.* descend so particularly, as to give his advice against Marriage, which was neither forbid by Revelation nor Reason, but  
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was highly warranted by both, as absolutely necessary for the propagation of Christianity, and the accomplishment of the promises? Could the Apostle, I say, descend to this, and take no notice of a sin of so black and damnable a nature as frequenting the Theatres is by Mr *Collier* pretended to be? A sin too which endanger'd the salvation not only of the Christians to whom he writ, but those who were to succeed them in all posterity? But, says *Tertullian*, the Apostle had no occasion expressly to condemn what is condemn'd by Reason. But that which was a reason in *Tertullian's* time does not subsist in ours, as we have plainly shewn above. But if any one at last shall urge, that the acting of Plays was condemn'd by express Scripture, because it was a part of the Pagan worship, and Idolatry was expressly condemn'd; to this I answer, That nothing can make more for my cause than this: For since the Spirit of God condemn'd the representation of Plays only as they were included under Idolatry, you must either shew that the Spirit of God did not foresee that in process of time they would cease to be  
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Idolatrous, which to affirm is horrible Blasphemy ; or you must acknowledge, that by condemning them only under the general term of Idolatry, he approv'd them, and allow'd of them, as soon as they should be no longer Idolatrous ; or else you must be forc'd to acknowledge that the word of God is defective , and does not contain all things which are necessary to the salvation of his people. Besides , it may be manifestly prov'd from *St Paul*, that the Idolatry of them extended no farther than to the representation of them, which representation was render'd Idolatrous, only by the direction and intention of the Magistrates and Publick, at whose expence they were represented ; for *St Paul* has sufficiently warrant-ed the writing them , and consequently the reading of them, by citing a verse of a Comick Poet in the first Epistle to the *Corinthians* ch. 15. v. 33. for if those writings had been in themselves Idolatrous, *St Paul* durst neither have read them while a Jew, nor cited them while a Christian, Idolatry both to Jew and Christian being alike abominable. But it is evident that he has  
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cited them ; for it is known to all the world , that *evil communication corrupts good manners*, is a verse of *Menander*, and the *Corinthians* particularly could not be ignorant of it. Since then the Spirit of God thought fit to put the verse of a Comick Poet into the mouth of his greatest Apostle, as very fit for the instruction of his people, and the reformation of mankind ; and since the same Spirit has said not a Syllable to condemn either Plays or Theatres, any farther than as they are included under Idolatry, it seems to be very plain to me, that he has not only approved, but recommended Plays to his people, when they are not corrupt and idolatrous. For the *Corinthians* saw plainly that St Paul had read *Menander*, they were convinc'd that he had cited him for their instruction, and consequently that he approv'd of him : since then they were satisfied that the Apostle read him, why might not they do the like, when St Paul had not said so much as a word to discourage 'em. Now if the reading him could be allowable, why should not the seeing him be equally lawful, when the representation should cease to be corrupt and idolatrous ?

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And therefore St *Thomas*, and the rest of the School-men, who liv'd when Dramatical representations were no longer Idolatrous, have loudly declared them lawful ; and they are at this very day encouraged in Countries, where they are mortally severe against any thing that offends Religion, and where the cruelty of the Inquisition is most outrageous. Thus have I endeavour'd to shew, that Plays are instrumental to human happiness, to the welfare of Government, and the advancement of Piety ; that Arts and Empire have flourish'd with the Stage, which has been always encouraged by the best of Men, and by the bravest Nations. After which I hope the Enemies of Plays will be reconciled to our Theatres, and not by persisting in their aversion, affect to seem more wise than the *Athenians*, more austere than the *Romans*, more nice than the School-men, more cruel than Inquisitors, and more zealous than the Apostle of the *Gentiles*.

F I N I S.



## ERRATA.

**P**age 6: for that is r. it is, p. 9. f. these passions r. the passions, lb. f. in these a full r. in a full, p. 24. f. even these r. even in these, p. 32. f. action r. citation, p. 38. f. who liv'd r. who was born p. 44. f. Stage r. State, p. 54. f. seeing r. saying, p. 65. f. not by r. not only by, p. 70. f. those opinions r. the opinions, p. 77. f. verum r. verum, p. 78. f. them r. it, p. 80. after especially r. Treaties of a State.



